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Near East & South Asia

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FBIS-NES-95-034 *21 February 1995*

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Arab-Israeli Talks

Palestinians, Israelis To Meet on Elections

'Urayqat Arrives in Cairo

NC2002220095 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2135 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Cairo, 20 Feb (MENA)—Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat, minister of local government in the Palestinian National Authority, arrived here this evening leading a delegation to attend the 11th round of Palestinian-Israeli talks on the Palestinian elections, which will open in Cairo tomorrow.

In a statement following his arrival, Dr. 'Urayqat noted that tomorrow's session will discuss the possibility of working out a joint draft on the points to be included in the interim agreement. He added that emphasis will be placed on the question of the international monitoring of the elections, as proposed by the Palestinian delegation, under the supervision of the UN and an international team from the United States, Russia, the 15 members of the EU, Egypt, Japan, and Canada. [passage omitted]

Israeli Delegation Arrives

NC2102103695 Cairo MENA in Arabic 0950 GMT 21 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 21 Feb (MENA)—The Israeli delegation to the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations arrived in Cairo today led by Yo'el Singer, head of the legal department at the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

The delegation will take part in the 11th round of negotiations to begin in Cairo later today. The talks will discuss issues pertaining to the [second] phase of the two sides' agreement.

The Palestinian delegation, led by Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat, minister of local government in the Palestinian Authority, arrived in Cairo last night to take part in the negotiations.

Peres, 'Arafat Explore Proposal for Janin 'Plus'

TA1902074395 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0505 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Peres and PLO leader Yasir 'Arafat met in Paris last night and tried to extricate the negotiations with the Palestinians from their deadlock. Israel is proposing that the Palestinians assume powers not only in Janin but in other locations in Judaea and Samaria as well. Gid'on Kouts, our correspondent in Paris, reports:

[Begin recording] [Kouts] The meeting in 'Arafat's room lasted less than an hour, and Minister Yosi Sarid, Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, and Palestinian Authority Justice Minister Furayh Abu-Middayn also took part. This may have been a positive result of Peres' conciliatory message to the Egyptians, which was defined by Musa as a first step in the right direction, but according to Palestinian sources, it indicated a setback in the peace process, which once again required the services of a mediator.

French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur had earlier been burned when he invited the two for a joint photograph and heard from them an exchange along the following lines:

Peres: We do not want to see a repetition of the scenes we witnessed at Bet Lid.

'Arafat: You broadcast pictures taken from archives.

This followed the harsh verbal exchange at the UNESCO plenum regarding what 'Arafat termed Israeli interference with Christian and Muslim rites of worship in Jerusalem.

The meeting in 'Arafat's room was calmer, according to Peres, also with regard to the misunderstanding about the Janin First idea:

[Peres] I told 'Arafat that this had been discussed earlier and that I could not understand why he was surprised, because it had been agreed on, but that it may be possible to find a better way of doing things.

[Kouts] What is this improvement? The reference, apparently, is to Janin Plus—namely, the transfer of economic and municipal authorities in several places. Here is Minister Yosi Sarid on the subject:

[Sarid] Proposals regarding Janin and other places were raised. 'Arafat raised ideas, and so did we and 'Amr Musa. All of this will be examined within a few days, and it is very possible that there will be additional contacts—though not necessarily by holding a meeting—this coming weekend. After these ideas are checked out, we will know whether they can be implemented in the near future.

[Kouts] You mean Janin and other places, right?

[Sarid] Janin is not the last place. Nobody thought we would stop at Janin.

[Kouts] The meeting also discussed options for easing the closure in return for gestures with regard to the war on terror.

To sum up, a meeting took place this weekend and another is expected in another two weeks or earlier, if new ideas come up. 'Arafat did not leave his room to make a statement to the media, allowing Peres, Sarid, and Musa to manage on their own. These are hard and crucial days for the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. [end recording]

[Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew at 0600 GMT on 19 February adds that the Janin Plus idea involves the transfer of administrative powers and not security control and that contacts on this may continue in Paris today.]

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[Tel Aviv Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 0600 GMT on 19 February adds that "while Peres summed up the meeting with 'Arafat on a positive note, despite exchanges of accusations at the beginning, an 'Arafat spokesman said there was no real progress."]

Paper: Blair House Talks Produce Only Modest Results

MM1702133195 London AL-SIIARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 16 Feb 95 p 3

["News Report" by Muhammad Sadiq: "Results of Five-Way Washington Meeting No More Than General Words of Support for Peace"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Washington—The joint statement issued by the five-way meeting, which was held in Blair House in Washington last Sunday [12 February] under the chairmanship of the U.S. secretary of state, and was attended by the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan, and Israel, in addition to the Palestinian National Authority's representative, reflected the very modest results of the meeting. It also confirmed the truth about "the reservation and lack of optimism" as regards its achievement of significant progress—something which some interested circles expressed before the meeting and during the preparation of its agenda. This was reflected in the joint statement, which was written in general words, frequently used in the past, such as the affirmation of the parties' agreement to proceed with the peace process, hence the efforts to move forward and surmount the difficulties preventing the achievement of progress, in addition to the determination not to allow the enemies of the peace process to destroy it.

But what was "achieved?" And what had been hoped to be achieved but was not, and why?

The meeting's achievement was reflected in the statement and reiterated by Secretary Warren Christopher as regards cooperation in the political sphere, one of three spheres in which the U.S. sponsor said the meeting's objective was to achieve further cooperation, proceeding from what was achieved at the Cairo summit, which was held 2 February. But the cooperation achieved in the political sphere, specifically between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, and with which the Palestinians expressed satisfaction, is, in the view of circles concerned with the peace process, no more than "a very modest achievement." Because the two sides' agreement to implement the self-rule remains dependent on the sincerity of Israel's intentions and its seriousness in cooperating with the Palestinian side to do that. The Israeli side's saying that the Palestinian Authority should perform its duty and work to prevent extremists from carrying out violent actions against Israel—although the Israeli side expressed "satisfaction" with what the Palestinian Authority is doing in this connection—is nothing but an indication that the Israeli conditions still exist and that Israel does not recognize the fact that implementing the Palestinian agreement, lifting the blockade on the Palestinians, and enabling the authority to consolidate its foundations are the first step which should be taken to help to halt violence.

Despite the Palestinian satisfaction, the main points of disagreement remained unresolved as regards freezing settlement activities, despite the new Israeli pledges, or as regards the release of Palestinian prisoners and holding elections in the occupied territories. [passage omitted]

The same thing applies to the economic aspect, since the statement spoke about the need for development and investment in the region, but it did not say how or mention the source of financing. Neither the statement nor Christopher broached this point. But a senior U.S. official said that the United States would work in this connection with European states, Japan, and others, meaning it is going to help to secure the money or part of it for the development and investment in question—which brings nothing new, compared with what has been repeatedly said in the past without achieving anything.

There remains the most important aspect—security. The Israeli side's and the U.S. side's main preoccupation was not only to achieve cooperation in this sphere, but also to agree on an understanding or an alliance to fight terrorism. The Egyptian side saw this as part of a broader framework for the concept of security in the region, if the aim is to achieve a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace.

With regard to the results in this sphere, what had been required was not achieved, especially the security alliance demanded by the Israeli side. [passage omitted]

VOP: No Progress in 'Arafat-Peres Paris Talks

JN1902083195 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0600 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat met with Israeli Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres in Paris last night in the presence of Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa. The meeting, which lasted less than one hour, did not achieve any progress.

Peres said in a statement that problems still exist, asserting that talks will take place swiftly to find a solution.

Inter-Arab Affairs

Arab League Condemns Israeli Attacks in Lebanon

NC2102135395 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1230 GMT 21 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The Arab League delivered a strong condemnation of Israel for its continued aggression against and occupation of Lebanese territories and its brutal assaults on innocent citizens.

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The Arab League urged the international community, particularly the UN Security Council, to compel Israel to halt its aggression against Lebanon and implement the Council's Resolution 425 which calls for full Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territories.

Ambassador Ahmad Bin-Hilli, director of the Arab League's Arab Desk, told our radio correspondent today that the League stands by the Lebanese people and backs their steadfastness against the unjust Israeli occupation.

The Arab League's condemnation coincided with a state of guarded tension on the combat lines adjacent to the border strip in south Lebanon following Israeli attacks on villages in the area.

Arab League Chief Returns From Syria, Lebanon Visit

NC1802145995 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1230 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 18 Feb (MENA)—Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid regrets that Israel is placing obstacles in the way of implementation of the agreements it signed with some Arab states. He stressed in this regard that the Arab states are eager to achieve a comprehensive peace based on the implementation of international resolutions and the principle of land for peace.

Speaking upon his return to Cairo from Beirut today following a visit to Syria and Lebanon, Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid praised the coordination and solidarity between the Lebanese and Syrian positions regarding the peace process and their eagerness to make it successful, particularly since peace is a strategic option. He described his tour as fruitful, noting that the timing of the tour was appropriate in light of the ongoing events in the region.

Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid once again voiced the Arab League's rejection of the Israeli stand on the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT]. He noted that the Arab League's committee of experts, which met in Cairo last week, reflected in its recommendations the Arab states' unified stand in this regard. He noted that this stand is clear and emphasizes the need for Israel to sign the NPT so that there will be equality among all parties.

Arab League Aide: Regional Accord Not Linked to NPT

MM1702172695 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 17 Feb 95 p 3

[Report by 'Ali Ibrahim: "Arab League and Egyptian Foreign Ministry Officials Tell AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT: 'Mass-Destruction' Treaty Not Linked With New York Conference"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] London—An Arab League official and an Egyptian Foreign Ministry official were keen not to directly link a draft regional agreement discussed over the past two days by 18 Arab states, designed to free the Middle East region from mass-destruction weapons, with the Arab position on the renewal of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in April. They also confirmed Arab solidarity in this connection.

In a statement to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT over the telephone Arab League Assistant Secretary General 'Adnan 'Imran said that the upcoming conference scheduled to be held in New York to extend the signing of the international treaty will be one of the biggest diplomatic, security, and political battles in which the Arab states have engaged, in view of the crystallization of a general Arab position linking the renewal to Israel's joining the agreement. Regarding the Arab League committee's meeting to discuss a draft treaty aimed at freeing the region from mass-destruction weapons, he said that the meeting was "exemplary in terms of its success," contrary to some analyses which said that nothing was agreed. He pointed out that a treaty of this kind is not expected to be ratified in the Arab League Council meeting, scheduled to be held in Cairo at foreign minister level on 22 March.

He pointed out that this plan is for the future and requires time for preparation, and it could take years before an agreement is ratified. It will not be referred to the Arab League for ratification, because it will be a regional agreement involving other parties.

In the same context Dr. Mahmud Karim, director of the disarmament department at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, has told AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that this issue has been on the Arab League's agenda for three years. The Arab League Council in its September session assigned a committee of experts—which met twice—to discuss this issue. He pointed out that the proposed regional treaty is similar to agreements on nuclear weapons in other parts of the world, such as Latin America and south the Pacific. The new thing in the plan proposed for the region is that it includes all mass-destruction weapons (nuclear, chemical, and biological), not just nuclear weapons. The Arab League General Secretariat was assigned to coordinate with the Egyptian delegation to prepare the draft agreement.

For his part, 'Adnan 'Imran said that the experts committee meeting in the league this week was very successful. He denied the existence of any disparity in the Arab states' positions, pointing out that views are identical. [passage omitted]

Palestinian Affairs

'Arafat Calls Executive Committee Meeting in Cairo

Meeting Called 'Unexpected Development'

NC2002122095 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1132 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Feb (MENA)—Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat has decided to hold a

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meeting of the PLO Executive Committee in Cairo tomorrow evening, Tuesday [21 February]. This is an unexpected development contradicting an earlier plan to convene the meeting after the 'Id al-Fitr holiday.

PLO Executive Committee member Jamal al-Surani told MENA that 'Arafat informed him of the new date for the Executive Committee meeting last night. The Palestinian president will chair the meeting himself.

Al-Surani said that the last PLO Executive Committee meeting was held in Gaza two months ago. He declined to comment on the reason why the meeting date has been advanced or what subjects the committee will discuss.

Palestinian sources in Cairo have explained that President 'Arafat decided to convene the Executive Committee meeting without any further delay after his talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres in Paris failed to produce results. That meeting was held on the sidelines of a symposium on the future of the Mediterranean.

The Palestinian sources said tomorrow's meeting will last for one day and will debate the Palestinian position in the wake of Israel's refusal to abide by the provisions of the Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles and its intentional obstruction of all the agreement's clauses, including the holding of legislative Palestinian elections, the redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank, the transfer of powers in that area to the Palestinians, the release of detainees, and other issues that should have been implemented by July 1994.

The sources added that another issue on the Executive Committee's agenda are the deteriorating economic conditions inside the Palestinian territories that have resulted from the Israeli economic siege and the donor countries' failure to fulfill their promises to the Palestinian Authority.

It should be noted that the Executive Committee is the PLO's highest body. It draws up the PLO's main internal and external policies. It has 18 members headed by President 'Arafat.

Six Executive Committee members have suspended their membership in protest against the signing of the Oslo agreement between the PLO and Israel. They are Mahmud Darwish, Shafiq al-Hut, and 'Abdallah al-Hurani, who are independent members, and one representative of each of the following factions: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Arab Liberation Front.

Committee To Adopt Stand on Peace Process

JN2002132095 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1200 GMT 20 Feb 95

[Report by Basim Abu-Sumayyah in the "occupied territories"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Palestinian Culture and Information Minister Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh has said that the PLO Executive Committee will meet in Cairo tomorrow in the presence of two-thirds of its members, or maybe more.

In an interview with Radio Monte Carlo, 'Abd-Rabbuh said that the Executive Committee will adopt a comprehensive stand on the peace process concerning the Israeli procrastination in implementing the agreements. He said that this does not mean giving up the process, but could result in an invitation to a Palestinian meeting within the framework of the PLO Central Council to review the entire peace process.

On choosing Cairo as the venue for the PLO Executive Committee meeting, 'Abd-Rabbuh said that Egypt is the basic Arab country in the peace process and that this choice has political significance.

The Egyptian capital is expected to host a new round of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on legislative elections tomorrow.

Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat, head of the Palestinian side to these negotiations, has stated that both sides are preparing to reach a common formula on the issues that should be included in the comprehensive agreement. These issues comprise the supervision of the elections process, the participation of the inhabitants of East Jerusalem, the configuration and tasks of the Palestinian Authority council, and other issues.

Dr.'Urayqat said elections cannot be held if no agreement is reached on the Israeli Army's redeployment in the occupied West Bank.

'Abd-Rabbuh Blames Israel for 'Impasse'

JN2002204095 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1830 GMT 20 Feb 95

[Interview with PA Culture Minister Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh by Fathi al-Barqawi on 20 February; place not given—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [al-Barqawi] Mr. Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh, welcome.

['Abd-Rabbuh] Thank you.

[Al-Barqawi] The PLO Executive Committee will meet in Cairo tomorrow after a long suspension of meetings. Would you tell us about the importance of this meeting?

['Abd-Rabbuh] It is known that the Executive Committee is the higher political leadership of the Palestinian people and the point of reference for the Palestinian Authority [PA]. The Executive Committee will meet to discuss the experiment of the past months regarding the PA's work, as well as the agreements with Israel. It is obvious that this meeting is taking place under very serious political conditions. Israel completely disavows the agreements and attempts to draw on the ground a

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new formula which it is trying to impose on the Palestinian side, thereby violating the agreements. There is settlement expansion, as well as hesitation and procrastination in implementing the relocation, thereby obstructing the elections. There is also the issue of detainees, which is still unresolved. All these matters need a comprehensive review by the Executive Committee. I expect the meeting to adopt an extremely important stand in terms of reviewing the political process in light of this experiment, whose overall results were not positive.

[Al-Barqawi] Therefore, it seems that this meeting comes following an impasse?

['Abd-Rabbuh] The meeting will try to look at all the aspects of the impasse. The political and economic circumstances and the situation through which the Palestinian issue is passing requires study and comprehensive review. The Palestinian side is not responsible for the impasse in the political process; it is the Israeli policy that is responsible for the impasse. The Israeli policy obstructed the agreement and even basic parts of the Gaza- Jericho accord have not been implemented so far. This was before the recent operations. Now, after these operations, Israeli obstacles have become more obvious.

[Al-Barqawi] Is there a possibility for convening the PLO Central Council?

['Abd-Rabbuh] All possibilities are open. I believe that the PLO Central Council will convene after 'Id al-Fitr. There will be a call for holding an expanded Arab meeting, which might be within the framework of the Arab League or within another framework, so as to discuss the effects of this obstructionist policy on the situation in the entire region. There will be also a move on the international level, as well as steps to strengthen the unity of Palestinian national ranks, both inside and outside the territories, to face these serious developments caused by the Israeli policy.

[Al-Barqawi] Brother Abu-Bashshar [Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh], thank you.

['Abd-Rabbuh] Thank you.

Al-Surani: Committee Could Suspend Talks

NC2002155695 Paris AFP in English 1454 GMT 20 Feb 95

[By Mona Salem]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, Feb 20 (AFP)—Palestinian leader Yasir 'Arafat has called an urgent meeting of the PLO's executive body which could decide to suspend talks with Israel and risk shattering the peace process, a PLO member said Monday [20 February].

"All the options are open at Tuesday's meeting in Cairo ... including the suspension of the negotiations," the committee's secretary Jamal al-Surani told AFP.

"If anyone thinks the Palestinians have no trump cards left, they are making a mistake because the suspension of the negotiations could have the effect of an atomic bomb on the whole peace process," he warned.

But 'Arafat said after talks with French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe in Paris that the peace process was not dead and that Tuesday's meeting was to "discuss and evaluate the situation overall."

"We are committed to the peace process, but we have arrived at an impasse," he said. Asked whether the peace process was dead he replied simply, "No."

Al-Surani said the committee would rethink the whole of the peace process and draw up a new programme for peace.

'Arafat is due to arrive in Cairo on Tuesday via Tunis from Paris, where he failed in talks late Saturday with Israeli Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres to break the deadlock on extending Palestinian self-rule across the West Bank.

But when asked late Sunday by French television France 2, monitored in Jerusalem, if he was considering calling off the peace talks, 'Arafat said: "No. No."

The Israeli Foreign Ministry also denied there was any "special crisis" in the talks.

"We know there is some amount of opposition among the Palestinians, not necessarily to the whole process but to the way it is being handled now," a spokesman said.

Israeli Environment Minister Yosi Sarid told AFP, "Negotiations with the Palestinians really are on the right track."

"Things are going to get better day by day," predicted Sarid who met 'Arafat in Paris at the weekend. "This government will implement the Declaration of Principles from A to Z."

A new round of Israeli-PLO talks on holding Palestinian elections to a self-rule council is also to be held on Tuesday in Cairo.

Israel was to redeploy from Palestinian centres on the West Bank ahead of July 1994 elections. But it has baulked at setting a new date amid fears for the safety of the 130,000 settlers on the bank following a wave of anti-Israeli attacks.

"Everything is deadlocked. We are no longer talking about the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords, nor the redeployment of the Israeli army, nor the settlements," al-Surani charged.

"The only subject on the current agenda of the negotiations is Israel's security."

According to the PLO office in Cairo, at least 10 out of the 18 committee members are expected to attend Tuesday's meeting, which needs nine members to attend for a quorum.

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'Arafat would "probably be accompanied" by both Mahmud Abbas (Abu-Mazin) and Faruq Qaddumi, who boycotted the last meeting held in November in Gaza.

'Arafat chairs the committee which is the highest executive body for all Palestinians both in the territories and in exile and groups all Palestinian factions except the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Islamic Jihad.

Two of the committee members have resigned and four have suspended their participation in protest at the autonomy accords.

Independent member 'Abdallah al-Hurani also poured scorn on the idea. "It's two years since 'Arafat has had any contact, even by telephone, with several of the committee members," he said.

Another independent member in Amman, Iliya Khuri, said he would take part because it was a "national and pan-Arab duty ... at such a crucial juncture."

The Palestinians last suspended the talks with Israel after the February 1994 Hebron mosque massacre, but that was before the May launch of self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

PNC Secretary Previews Meeting

NC2002153595 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1315 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Muhammad Subayh, Palestine National Council [PNC] secretary and Palestinian envoy to the Arab League, has stated that the PLO Executive Committee meeting set for Cairo on Tuesday [21 February] evening will basically focus on assessing the peace process in light of the real crisis this process is currently encountering. In a statement to MENA today, he said that this crisis is manifest in the failure plaguing all meetings between Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin and Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres. He noted that even the quadripartite summit in Cairo did not achieve any positive results. He stressed that Israel continues to create problems in the peace process by continuing to build settlements in the territories that are scheduled to be returned to the Palestinian National Authority, granting Jordan religious supervision of Arab Jerusalem, making statements about backing out of the Oslo Agreement and renegotiating some of its clauses. This is in addition to statements by Rabin and other Israeli officials that the Arabs must forget about Jerusalem.

Subayh said that even the offer that Israel made to the Palestinian Authority [PA] to run the administrative and municipal affairs of the city of Janin while Israel continues to take care of its security makes the PA look like a mere mayorship and President 'Arafat like a mayor. He pointed out that the PLO Executive Committee held a meeting in Gaza in December but certain parties considered the meeting illegal because it lacked a quorum. He said that the PA was formed by a decision of the PLO Executive Committee and the Central Council; and therefore, it is necessary for the peace process to be referred back to the Exeuctive Committee at this time.

PFLP, DFLP Refuse To Attend Meeting

JN2102124095 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic 21 Feb 95 p 14

[Report by 'Awdah 'Awdah]

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman—Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat has called on the 18 members of the PLO Executive Committee to hold an emergency meeting in Cairo this evening (Tuesday) after a hiatus of more than one and a half years.

'Umar al-Khatib, Palestinian charge d'affaires in Amman, said that members of the PLO Executive Committee residing in Amman were informed of this yesterday. These members include Bishop Iliya Khuri, an independent member; 'Abd-al-Rahim Malluh, representative of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine [PFLP]; and Taysir Khalid, representative of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine [DFLP].

Al-Khatib said this meeting would be decisive, especially in light of the critical circumstances which the Palestinian cause and people are going through.

In telephone statements to AL-RA'Y, Bishop Iliya Khuri, member of the PLO Executive Committee, said he would attend the meeting; adding that to do so is a national and pan-Arab duty at this difficult stage. He also said he hoped all members of the PLO Executive Committee would attend.

Bishop Khuri added: We will listen to all the steps the Palestinian leadership has taken to deal with the next stage.

PLO Executive Committee members 'Abd-al-Rahim Malluh and Taysir Khalid have refused to attend the Executive Committee meeting.

In statements to AL-RA'Y, Malluh said that this PLO Executive Committee meeting will not tackle the deep crisis the Palestinian arena is facing and that it will not extricate the Oslo and Cairo accords from their ordeals.

Malluh described this Executive Committee meeting as an attempt to hold committee members responsible for neglecting the Palestinian national rights and for submitting to Israeli conditions accepted by the self-rule authority.

Malluh called for a comprehensive political and national reassessment that would maintain the Palestinian people's rights and higher national interests, as well as their right to repatriation, self-determination, and establishment of their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

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The PFLP representative at the PLO Executive Committee also demanded a reassessment of the Oslo and Cairo accords. He said they must be repealed due to the serious harm they have caused the unity of the Palestinian people and their national cause. It has become clear to everyone that these accords are not a solution to the conflict in the region. Indeed, they have exacerbated the political situation.

In reply to a question by AL-RA'Y, Tayseer Khalid stressed his refusal to attend the meeting. He said: The chairman of the PLO Executive Committee called for a meeting without explaining its objective. This gives the impression that, once again, he wants to use the Executive Committee to maneuver and deceive the Executive Committee members and the Palestinian people.

The DFLP representative at the PLO Executive Committee added that there is nothing which indicates that the chairman of the PLO Executive Committee is willing to respect the Palestine National Council decisions and the bases of the front coalition on which the PLO was founded.

Khalid called on members of the Executive Committee to reject the call for a meeting. He also urged all national, democratic, and Islamic forces, as well as all national organizations and figures, to open a national dialogue in order to pave the way for a national conference. He said this must be done as soon as possible to organize a struggle against the occupation and settlement building and activities in the Palestinian territories.

Khalid said that the Oslo accord with its humiliating conditions and stipulations is dying. He added that it is really time to rebuild the political settlement on new bases aimed at achieving national rights, including the right to self-determination, independence, and the Palestinian people's exercise of sovereignty over their Palestinian land.

Radio Highlights Upcoming Meeting

JN2102114195 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0622 GMT 21 Feb 95

[Station commentary by Yusuf al-Qazzaz]

[FBIS Translated Text] The PLO Executive Committee, the political reference of the Palestinian National Authority [PNA], will hold an important meeting today. The political process, with all its ramifications and developments, will be at the center of the Executive Committee meeting. However, and in order to avoid any misunderstanding of what is going on, we would like to clearly state that the peace process, for us as Palestinians, is a strategic option although it has reached a dead end due to the policy of Israel—Israel which builds settlements and imposes military cordons, closure, and collective punishments on the Palestinian people. In doing so, Israel reneges on the Oslo and the Cairo agreements, which were concluded with the leadership of the Palestinian people, the PLO, represented on the ground by the PNA.

As Palestinians, the peace process is our strategic option. We might differ, but the Palestinian dream brings us together—a dream whose political meaning is that it is inevitable for us to have a Palestinian state, nothing less than a Palestinian state whose capital will be Jerusalem and no other capital but Jerusalem.

In Cairo today, we will assess the peace process and discuss the serious developments in the Israeli position, which is close to practically annulling the peace process despite statements by some Israeli officials in the past two days to the effect that there is no crisis in talks between Israel and the PNA.

Today, the Palestinian leadership will clearly state its position from Cairo, the land of Egypt which resists the Israeli hegemony over the Arab political position and which made peace with Israel. It will clearly say to the entire world, the great Palestinian people, and the Arab nation, and the entire world: Peace is our strategic option. We will not go back to the jungle. The Palestinian language of peace expresses the suffering of the Palestinian people here in the homeland and there in the diaspora; it expresses the moaning of our brave wounded people; all the cries of our heroic prisoners in Israeli prisons; and the sighs of the mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters of heroic martyrs. Our new language and anthem are: Freedom and the Palestinian state with its capital Jerusalem. Peace is our option and on its basis we will move in all directions. We will give Rabin's government no chance for maneuvering. It has no choice but peace, which is in the interest of Israel as well as the entire region.

We will move toward the cosponsors of the peace process, toward Europe, and the Vatican to place all before their responsibility, in the hope that we, Palestinians, might obtain some sort of pledge from a new Balfour [alluding to the 1917 Balfour Declaration to Jews].

The Palestinians are not and will never be responsible for security in Israel. When Egypt made peace with Israel and when Jordan signed a peace agreement with Israel, neither was said to be responsible for Israel's security. Our Palestinian people cannot preserve Israel's security so long as Israel is building settlements, killing and arresting Palestinians, demolishing houses, failing to implement agreements with the PNA, and refusing to withdraw its troops from our Palestinian land.

No other people, throughout history, have experienced such exodus, banishment, and suffering as the Palestinian people have. Our Palestinian people have become quite used to forbearance and suffering. Occupation will only boost their strong belief that they will eventually triumph, no matter how long occupation may last. Our dilemma, as Palestinians, is transient, but the dilemma of the Israeli governments is an eternal one so long as these governments continue to reject coexistence and peace with the Palestinian people, and so long as Israel does not change and continues to think that it has an enemy called the people of Palestine.

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We will again say yes to peace at the Executive Committee meeting in Cairo today, but not at any price. Yes to the peace of the brave, yes to peace that safeguards the security of Palestine and Israel, yes to peace that would ensure the establishment of our Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. We will continue to disseminate our Palestinian message—the message of freedom and peace—so that we can serve the cause of just, comprehensive, and permanent peace.

'Arafat Rejects Offer to Take Over Janin Municipality

JN1702150295 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1400 GMT 17 Feb 95

[Report by 'Adil al-Za'nun in Gaza]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] President Yasir 'Arafat performed Friday prayers at al-Katibah Mosque in Hay al-Rimal in Gaza today. The president concentrated, in a brief address after the prayers, on what took place during his meeting yesterday with Israeli Prime Minister Rabin. President 'Arafat said: Among the issues which we were supposed to agree on were the relocation [of the Israeli Army] throughout the rest of the West Bank and the holding of elections.

The president noted that he rejected an Israeli offer to take over the Janin municipality, adding that we used to run the Janin municipality from here, from Tunis, and from Beirut because we are one people. He said that he appointed the Hebron and Nabulus municipal committees, as well as many other municipal committees. The president added: I told him we agreed to implement the Declaration of Principles. [passage omitted]

Abu-Rudaynah on Israel's Janin Offer

NC1802084195 Cairo Voice of the Arabs in Arabic 0610 GMT 18 Feb 95

[Interview with Nabil Abu-Rudaynah, political adviser to Yasir 'Arafat, in Gaza, by Muhammad al-Aswad, in Cairo; date not given; from the "Dialogue From Afar" program—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [al-Aswad] We start this dialogue by shedding light on the most important points in President Yasir 'Arafat's meeting with the Israeli prime minister at the Erez crossing point. Can we talk about the progress made at this meeting, even when compared with the previous meeting between 'Arafat and Yitzhaq Rabin?

[Abu-Rudaynah] Regrettably, we cannot say that there was major progress. As you know, a summit was held in Cairo at President Mubarak's initiative to salvage the peace process and it was followed by a meeting of the foreign ministers in Washington, which was opened by President Chrisopher [as heard]. As a result of these efforts, we were in fact expecting the Israeli side to put more than it did on the negotiating table. Not much was achieved. The results were less than expected, especially after the Cairo summit.

[Al-Aswad] President 'Arafat refused to take over Janin without a Palestinian police force. What is your interpretation of the Israeli proposal on this city?

[Abu-Rudaynah] First, there is a misunderstanding on this issue. There was in fact no offer to hand over Janin. The offer was to hand over the Janin municipality. We have been in charge of this municipality for many years, from when we were in Tunis and in Beirut before it. The PLO has been managing the municipal affairs in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for decades. What was offered was different from what they said. We refused to take over the Janin municipality. We are ready to take over any piece of land if it is part of an agreed on timetable for [Israeli] withdrawal. We asked to take over the Janin area as an area and a district. But the Israeli side's offer was only to assume the municipal authority. We can say that the Israeli offer was to hand over the municipality not Janin. President 'Arafat rejected this.

[Al-Aswad] At their recent meeting, President 'Arafat and Rabin agreed to reduce some of the restrictions on Gaza and the West Bank. In this context, Rabin announced that 16,000 Palestinians would go back to work in Israel. Is this enough to alleviate the Palestinian people's sufferings since we know that the Israeli policies for 27 years deprived these people of development and peace?

[Abu-Rudaynah] This measure is not enough. The rate of unemployment in the Gaza Strip is more than 50 percent. At times, more than 70,000 used to work in Israel. Allowing 10,000 of them to go back is a small percentage and is not enough to end the crisis. The siege of Gaza and the Israeli action of separation are impeding the development process and are, in the first place, a violation of the agreement signed by the PLO and the Israeli Government. What is needed is the Israeli Army's redeployment, its withdrawal from the cities, and the lifting of the Gaza siege to prepare for the political separation to establish the Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank with East Jerusalem as its capital. [passage omitted]

'Arafat Said Prepared To Accept Janin Early Empowerment

TA1902165995 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1605 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] PLO Chairman Yasir 'Arafat is prepared to accept the plan for early empowerment in Janin and other towns on the condition that it comes as part of a comprehensive plan with an agreed-upon timetable for IDF [Israel Defense Forces] redeployment and elections in the territories. Our correspondent Gid'on Kouts spoke with 'Arafat in Paris today:

[Begin recording] [Kouts] Yasir 'Arafat is prepared to accept a phased solution such as early empowerment in Janin and other towns on the condition that it comes as

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part of a comprehensive plan with an acceptable timetable for IDF redeployment and elections in the territories. This was reported by sources in his entourage. 'Arafat himself commented on the proposals floated yesterday at the meeting between Egyptian, Israeli, and Palestinian officials.

['Arafat, in English] What we are speaking about is the second phase of the redeployment and the elections, which is very important. You know that this was supposed to be in last July and has been delayed for eight months.

[Kouts translates above remarks into Hebrew and continues] Contrary to the pessimistic descriptions of his aides, 'Arafat said that yesterday's meeting was good.

['Arafat, in English] It was a good meeting in which we had discussed, the three of us: Mr. Peres, Mr. 'Amr Musa, and me, the whole issue.

[Kouts translates above remarks into Hebrew and continues] However, when asked whether he is optimistic, 'Arafat replied that he is a pragmatic man who does not deal with dreams but with realities and hard facts. He also denied a report that he attributed to a certain Palestinian official according to which he intends to return to Tunis because of the difficulties in the peace process. There is no truth to this, 'Arafat asserted. [passage omitted] [end recording]

Israeli Report on Ramallah Offices Denounced

JN1702154995 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1400 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The National Authority [NA] said today it will not accept partial agreements to expand its authority to the entire occupied West Bank. This rejection came following an Israeli proposal to hand over municipal responsibility in Janin. Economy Minister Ahmad Quray', known as Abu-'Ala' said: Nobody can accept such things.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin offered President Yasir 'Arafat, during their meeting yesterday, the economic and municipal administration of Janin. Rabin admitted that President 'Arafat rejected the offer.

Abu-'Ala' said: Janin is part of the West Bank and we are speaking about redeployment in the West Bank, not only in Janin. He added: We can accept a gradual agreement but this should take place within the framework of a comprehensive agreement. He said: This proposal will not lead to any agreement, but will lead to something contrary to that.

Today, NA Culture Minister Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh denounced an Israeli radio report that Israel is threatening to close the Palestinian Culture and Information Ministry offices in Ramallah. 'Abd-Rabbuh said responsibility for culture and education were handed over completely to the Palestinian National Authority in the process of handing over powers in the West Bank last November. He added: This is a very serious matter which means Israel wants to abolish the signed agreements, not just postpone their implementation.

'Arafat Receives Clinton Message, $75 Million

JN1702180395 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1700 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat has received a message from U.S. President Bill Clinton. U.S. Consul-General Mr. [Edward] Abington conveyed the message to President 'Arafat during a meeting at noon today.

The U.S. President reiterated, in his message, the U.S. commitment to the peace process and to render it a success. He also asserted the need to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The U.S. President greeted President 'Arafat and his ability to make the decisions which put the Palestinian people on the beginning of the path to achieve their objectives.

In another development, the U.S. Administration will give the Palestinian Authority $75 million to support it in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and to set up development institutions and projects. U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher announced this yesterday to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

'Arafat Briefs Russian Ambassador on Erez Meeting

JN1702192895 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1830 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat has received the Russian ambassador to Israel at the Presidential Office in Gaza. President 'Arafat briefed the Russian ambassador on the results of his meeting yesterday with [Israeli] Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin. The talks also dealt with bilateral relations.

'Arafat Briefs Council on Rabin Meeting; Statement Issued

JN1802075195 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0600 GMT 18 Feb 95

[Statement issued by the Council of Ministers in Gaza on 18 February "following a meeting last night chaired by President Yasir 'Arafat"—read by announcer]

[FBIS Translated Text] In its meeting last night, the Council of Ministers was briefed in detail by President Yasir 'Arafat on his latest meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin.

The Council of Ministers, while emphasizing its total commitment to the peace process, the Declaration of Principles [DOP], and agreements based on it, expresses its extreme regret and deep concern over the outcome of the peace process despite the important meetings held during the Cairo summit and the Washington and Taba

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meetings, and the resulting hopes for resuscitating the peace march, especially on the Palestinian track in light of the failure to implement the interim phase which was supposed to have been implemented on 13 July 1994 and which was signed in Washington and Cairo, and in light of the absence of any signs to implement this agreement, which includes the redeployment of the Israeli forces and their withdrawal from all populated areas in the remainder of the West Bank, the transfer of power, holding elections, and other measures.

The entire peace process is exposed to immense danger as a result of the delay in implementing the interim agreements, the continuation of the settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in and around holy Jerusalem, the failure to release the detainees, and the collective punishment, in addition to the failure to implement several points in the Cairo agreements.

The Israeli Government justifies the delay in implementation sometimes by saying that the dates fixed in the agreement are not sacred and other times by saying that the Palestinian National Authority [PNA] cannot meet the cost of running its responsibilities, and by everybody concentrating on the [terrorist] operations alone, which we denounce and deplore, since they are against the interests of both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

The PNA will continue its international contacts with the U.S. and Russian cosponsors, the permanent UN Security Council member states, the UN secretary general, the Arab states, particularly Egypt, the Islamic states, the EU states, Norway, and Japan, and the nonaligned states, in order to muster large-scale international support for implementing the interim agreements, especially the redeployment, holding elections, and the transfer of powers.

The continuous stalling, delay, and wavering by the Israeli side is now threatening the peace process with negative repercussions and serious consequences. We appeal to the cosponsors of the peace process, the international community, and the United Nations to move quickly to save the peace process, and we stress the importance of efforts by the Israeli side to adhere to honest and accurate implementation of the second phase of the DOP in all its elements.

Based on the seriousness of the situation, the Council of Ministers stresses the importance of brother Abu 'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat] calling for an urgent meeting of the PLO Executive Committee and the Palestinian leadership to face these important and fateful developments.

'Arafat's Spokesman: PLO Custodian of Holy Places

JN1902151495 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1400 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Marwan Kanafani, official spokesman for President Yasir 'Arafat, today said that the PLO is responsible for the custodianship of the holy places. Kanafani added that the city of east Jerusalem is part of the occupied Palestinian territory in accordance with UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, especially Resolution 242, which calls for the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from these territories and handing them over to the Palestinian Authority.

'Arafat Attends Middle East Syposium in Paris

'Text' of Address to Symposium

JN1902203595 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1852 GMT 19 Feb 95

["Full text" of a speech by Yasir 'Arafat, PLO Executive Committee chairman, at a symposium on "The Middle East After Peace" held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 18 February—read by announcer]

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Balladur; Mr. Chairman; ladies and gentlemen: Allow me at the outset to express my happiness for the chance to participate with you in this important international symposium at the UNESCO building, here in Paris, the city of lights, and in the presence of and under the patronage of Prime Minister Balladur, as guests of the great and friendly French people under the title: The Mediterranean Region: What Future After the Peace Process? A select group of eminent thinkers, politicians, and economists are taking part with the aim of exchanging and coordinating views in order to define the future prospects for the Mediterranean region in which we live together and among whose states and people it is hoped understanding, dialogue, and mutual respect will prevail. We also hope that cooperation and coordination among these states will be promoted in order to reach the sublime aim for which we are working; namely, that peace will be established and prevail and that security and prosperity, and economic, social, and cultural progress will be achieved for all its states and peoples.

It is certain that reaching this aim depends on several factors, the most important of which is the success of the current peace process in the Middle East, especially on the Palestinian-Israeli track. This is because it has become very clear to every one that the progress being realized on this track constitutes the real yardstick for the progress of the peace process in the region as a whole, and on all the tracks, based on the premise that the Palestinian problem is the crux of the struggle in the region and the basis for reaching peace in it.

From the beginning, we announced our commitment to realizing the peace of the brave in Palestine. Here we emphasize to you again in this esteemed conference, that peace is a strategic option for the Palestinian people which cannot be abandoned or reversed. However, this peace requires the support of all in order to become a clear fact in the Middle East, especially in view of the challenges and difficulties that are facing us in our efforts

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to affirms this peace. Today this peace is being exposed to violent shocks that could strike at the entire peace process in the region.

In view of these extremely difficult circumstances which are related to the peace march in the Middle East and the great dangers which these circumstances are causing all of us, given that we are all living around this lake, this Mediterranean Sea, on whose future and the peace process we are convening this conference, I would like to concentrate in my speech on these important and serious aspects of the peace process and leave it to you, your esteemed conference, and the capable participants in it to devote attention and experience to the economic side of this conference. At the same time, I have confidence that they have the desire and ability to do that. Peace is closely connected with the success of the entire economic situation in the region and the effect of this on all those who live around the Mediterranean Sea.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen: As you are aware and regrettably, the peace process that won your support and blessings, is now passing through a serious and critical turning point that will have its negative effects and serious repercussions on these noble endeavors. This is because any delay or complacency and any hindrance to accurate and fair implementation of the remainder of the points in the Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles, represented by immediate implementation of the second phase, as stipulated in this agreement, especially the holding of elections, redeployment, and the transfer of power in the West Bank, will have deadly consequences and create conditions that will have a negative and serious effect on the peace process.

Regrettably, this deliberate obstruction takes place at times by claiming that the dates agreed upon in Washington and Cairo are not sacred; at other times, it is claimed that there are no funds for handing over powers in the West Bank. Finally, this is taking place against the background of the recent acts of violence inside Palestine and Israel, acts which we have strongly rejected and denounced, and whose price we have all paid. In addition, we have demonstrated our desire to cooperate to end these acts of violence and eliminate their causes.

What makes this Israeli attitude even more negative is that this deliberate obstruction is accompanied by other Israeli practices, which constitute a flagrant violation of the Declaration of Principles agreement and all international norms and laws. Among these practices is Israel's adoption of collective punishment, starvation, and siege against our people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel has also prevented our laborers from working, prevented the exchange of basic goods, closed the international borders with the neighboring Arab countries, intensified settlement activities, confiscated territories, refused to free prisoners, isolated the city of Jerusalem, and prevented Christian and Muslim worshipers from performing their religious duties freely.

This Israeli position, which disavows Israel's commitments, as stipulated in the Declaration of Principles agreement, violates the basic foundation of the peace process, namely, land for peace. This Israeli position also violates the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, national independence, as well as the rights of all nations to live in peace. These rights are expressed by the resolutions of international legitimacy, primarily Resolutions 242, 338, 425, and 904.

Mr. Chairman: The deteriorating situation of the peace process on the Palestinian-Israeli track requires the efforts and help of the two sponsoring states, the EU, the United Nations, all friends and brothers, and the forces that espouse freedom, justice, and peace, as well as those who have sided with the peace process since its inception. The purpose of this is to eliminate all obstacles that are preventing a quick, accurate, and honest implementation of the second phase of the Declaration of Principles.

At a time when we realize the importance of security for us and for Israel, we also realize that we have a holy duty; namely, not to give an opportunity to the enemies of peace to undermine the peace of the brave. The hope created by the peace of the brave is still strong and requires the active participation of everybody in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace for all the peoples and countries of the region. This objective cannot be achieved without making progress in the Palestine question—the essence of the peace process in the region and its sure guarantee. The Palestine question has a direct influence on prospects for cooperation and future relations in the region, as well as on repercussions in the Mediterranean region. For our part, our people and their leadership are eager to achieve this peace, under which the Palestinian people can build their national economy, set up their vital facilities and national institutions to consolidate the structures and frameworks of their National Authority, and rebuild their infrastructure, which was totally destroyed by the Israeli occupation. The purpose of this is to consolidate the peace for which we are all working in Palestine and the region and to set up structures and foundations for our modern developed community and its political system. This system is based on political pluralism, the rule of law, and freedom of expression in order to secure a happy and prosperous future.

Our people and the National Authority are looking with great hope to the European countries for political and moral support for the peace process in the region. We are looking forward to the intensification of this effort and to increases in this support, especially from friends in friendly France, who have previously launched striking initiatives and positive moves to rescue the peace process and assist our people in economic development within a comprehensive European plan. We are all aware of the importance of this to the whole peace process in the region and its central issue—the Palestine question—and the effect of this on the whole situation in the region and in the Mediterranean basin, out of the significant influence of geopolitics in our region and on all of us, in the north and south, east and west.

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Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen: The convening of this celebrated symposium on the future of the Mediterranean region after the peace process is a source of hope, especially since this region is a vital part of the world and peace and stability in it is a basic pillar for maintaining world security and peace. This region is also the center of political weight in the making of mankind's history. From that region, the alphabet and heavenly messages were launched and in its basin, especially in the Holy Land, Palestine, the three monotheistic religions were born.

Mr. Chairman: From this forum, from this Palais de Culture, I call anew for replacing the language of war with the language of peace and dialogue in order to establish constructive cooperation and build the joint future that ensures security, peace, and prosperity for all generations of Mediterranean peoples. There is no alternative but to pool the efforts of individuals, institutions, and states; mass resources; and coordinate ideas to arrive at an objective formula acceptable to all peoples and states of this region to ensure that they will all cooperate to build a secure, peaceful, and prosperous future for the Mediterranean region. There are enough resources, potential, and capabilities in this region that qualify it to play a great and effective role in the progress, development, and prosperity of human civilization as a whole. It is a challenge; and only by joining efforts and by understanding and cooperation can we face and overcome this challenge for the benefit of the peoples and states of this region, and for the sake of its future generations and the future of humanity as a whole. A radical changes such as this one will restore to this region—whose interests, cultures, and peoples intertwined through all stages in history, both in the ancient and recent past—its splendid civilized image with the approach of the 21st Century. This can only be achieved through effective economic cooperation, fruitful political cooperation, and mutual respect, and by resolving problems through peaceful means, understanding, and joint constructive action to preserve the intertwined and interlocked interests of our people within the context of a clear joint view. We, to the east and south of the Mediterranean, need our European partner, with whom we coexist, to harmonize with us in the making of the common future and destiny. This is a basic strategic view which we both need.

Chairman, ladies and gentlemen: All these ideas will remain mere theories and hopes, for which we must exert sustained efforts and pool resources if they are to materialize and build this part of the world, in which civilizations, ideas, cultures, and religions intertwine and interact. We, and our future generations, also want a region dominated by cooperation, mutual respect, and understanding; a region in which all peoples can enjoy security, stability, peace, equality, justice, fraternity, social progress, and economic development.

Finally, I thank you for your attention. I wish your celebrated symposium all success.

'Arafat Interviewed on Peace Process

LD1902204395 Paris France-2 Television Network in French 1900 GMT 19 Feb 95

[Report on interview with PLO Chairman Yasir 'Arafat by Phillipe Harrouard in Paris on 19 February—italicized passages recorded; 'Arafat speaks in Arabic with superimposed French translation]

[Harrouard] Receiving him with true Eastern hospitality this afternoon, Jean-Pierre Elkabbach [head of France Television] spoke to him about the future of Palestinian television, which is being created with the collaboration of France Television.

Before the cameras of France-2, Yasir 'Arafat spoke about his pessimism, although France and Europe have shown their determination to promote peace in the region, which is very useful, said Mr. 'Arafat.

['Arafat] *France's position today is very good, really. It is helping us to advance the peace process.*

[Harrouard] The problem, in 'Arafat's view, is how to get the peace process moving again.

['Arafat] *We have an agreement, we have a calendar with precise dates. The dates have to be respected and everything that is in this calendar must be faithfully carried out.*

[Harrouard] The situation of the Palestinians in Gaza worries 'Arafat in particular.

['Arafat] *There are many problems. You must know what is meant by hunger. Gaza today is experiencing the start of a famine. Real famine.*

[Harrouard] *And what is the first act necessary for unblocking the peace process? Is it elections, or something else, Mr. Chairman?*

['Arafat] *The redeployment of the Israeli army in the West Bank and elections.*

[Harrouard] Yasir 'Arafat is not unaware that the Israelis are attributing the deadlock to Palestinian terrorism.

['Arafat] *But in the beginning, when it was starting to lose time, these terrorist operations were not yet taking place. They said that the dates were not sacred. And then they said they had problems of a financial nature; at the level of the Palestinian authorities we resolved these financial problems with the donor countries in Brussels. One can find excuses every day. Why did we not respect the dates before these operations?*

[Harrouard] So, does he see a risk of a split with Israel today?

['Arafat] *We are partners in the peace process. We are faithful and we are engaged in this peace of the brave.*

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'Arafat Expresses Concern on Implementation

LD1902211195 Paris TF-1 Television Network in French 1900 GMT 19 Feb 95

[Interview with PLO Chairman Yasir 'Arafat by Claire Chazal in Paris—live; 'Arafat speaks in Arabic with simultaneous translation into French]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Chazal] As I told you at the beginning of this newsreel, Yasir 'Arafat is with us live. Good evening, Yasir 'Arafat. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for granting us, TF-1, your first interview since you arrived in the territories.

We have heard that a member of the PLO executive committee said today that the entire peace process with Israel was to be reviewed. Is this what you wish? Is this going to be done over the next few days or the next few weeks?

['Arafat] In truth, as I said quite clearly in my speech yesterday, we are totally engaged in favor of the peace process. This is a strategic choice made by the Palestinian people.

What makes us bitter, however, what is of concern to us, is the fact that things have been brought to a halt and they are preventing everything that was decided in Washington and Cairo from taking place: the negotiation process, the Palestinian elections in particular, the recovery of sovereignty, the issue of Gaza, the closure of the border to our Gaza citizens and the expansion of settlements, which is totally against the spirit and the letter of the Washington and Cairo agreements.

[Chazal] You know, Yasir 'Arafat, that the Israelis, through Yitzhaq Rabin among other people, are urging you to take really efficient measures against terrorism, before they prolong this peace process and switch to the second phase. What can you do in this respect?

['Arafat] Everyone knows that the two sides must take measures to end terrorism. This is not the duty or the responsibility of one of the two sides, but of the two sides. Remember the attacks in Jerusalem at al-Aqsa Mosque and at Abraham's tomb. I would say for instance that, since the beginning of the peace process—[pauses] may I remind you that 233 Palestinian citizens have been killed, for 112 Israeli citizens, which calls for cooperation from the two sides in order to save the peace process. This is why I said that we signed the peace of the brave. The peace of the brave must be continued: more courage is required on both sides for us to overcome all the difficulties we face in our endeavor to build real and lasting peace, not only for our generation, but also for future generations, for the children of our children, and this calls for a careful and collective approach on the two sides. Failing that, the peace process will be dealt a hard blow, and we must be fully aware of this.

[Chazal] Mr. Chairman, isn't it the case that Israel has already taken a step in your direction by reopening the territories, which it did today?

['Arafat] The opening of the crossing points is important, but there are other important things. For example, the elections, the redeployment of the Israeli Army - an operation which should have started in July, and now it is already March 1995 [as heard in French, 'Arafat says February in Arabic] and so that makes a delay of eight months.

At first we heard some Israeli leaders saying that the dates were not sacred. And then we were told that we didn't have the necessary funds to finance the activities of the Palestinian Authority. We went to the donors' meeting in Brussels and they calmed our concerns about the question of financing. But nothing was done.

Then the Israelis said that there was violence and security had to be guaranteed. But what security? Security for one side, or security for everyone?

We have lost people, but that didn't prevent us from continuing with the peace process. After the attack in Hebron I continued. I went on with the negotiations...

[Chazal, interrupting] I think unfortunately that it will be difficult to continue our interview with Yasir 'Arafat because of problems with the line. If we manage to reestablish the line, we will continue. [pause while line is reestablished]

[Chazal] A last question, Mr. President. When we see how difficult it is to implement this peace process, are you sometimes tempted to return to Tunis?

['Arafat] No, not at all. I am in my fatherland, and I shall remain in my fatherland.

[Chazal] Could we not say right now that the situation is such that we have reached a war logic?

['Arafat] No, we cannot say that either but we can say we are in great need right now of assistance and of all our friends, of all those acting towards the peace process, because peace is not a Palestinian claim or demand. It is also an Israeli and European demand. We all need peace and this is why I urge all our friends—I urge France and the authority it enjoys, I urge the European Community, the United States, Russia, Egypt, and Norway , all our friends—to give a new impetus to the peace process in order to enable us to implement the measures of this peace process for the sake of our children and future generations.

[Chazal] Thank you very much, Yasir 'Arafat, for answering the questions of TF-1. Thank you very much indeed.

'Arafat Sees Impasse in Talks

AU2002130695 Paris AFP in English 1254 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Paris, Feb 20 (AFP)—Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasir 'Arafat

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said Monday [20 Februrary] in Paris that the Middle East peace process was in an impasse but denied that it was dead.

A senior PLO official attending a seminar on the Middle East here meanwhile accused Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of personally destroying the peace process with his lack of vision.

"We believe that Israel has totally shattered the pillars of legitimacy of that process and has not respected its own agenda," said the PLO's London representative, Afif Safieh.

"Mr Rabin says he has problem with our opposition. We have a problem with Mr Rabin in person, " Safieh said. "He turned out to be only a general with a very narrow and short-sighted vision."

'Arafat said the peace process was blocked, but not necessarily permanently. "We are committed to the peace process, but we have arrived at an impasse," he said. Asked whether the peace process was dead he replied simply "No."

Speaking after meeting French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, he said France could help the peace process by lending its support politically and economically.

"I am sure that France can help us make progress in this peace of the brave," he said.

He added that he was going to a meeting of the executive committee of the PLO scheduled for Tuesday in Cairo to "discuss and evaluate the situation overall."

Juppe meanwhile conceded the gravity of the situation. "The crisis is serious," he said after meeting 'Arafat.

"We have to maintain the process and say to the parties to stop now would be a catastrophe, not only the Israeli-Palestinian issue, but for the whole region."

'Arafat on Opposition, Cairo Meeting

JN2002183695 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1737 GMT 20 Feb 95

[Interview with PLO Chairman Yasir 'Arafat by unidentified correspondent in Paris on 20 February—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Correspondent] President Yasir 'Arafat: You asserted in your speech at UNESCO, as well as on many occasions, that the Palestinian-Israeli talks have reached a real deadlock. What do you identify as the reasons for this deadlock?

['Arafat] In fact, we, as a people and a leadership, have a strategic commitment to the peace of the brave. We hoped, and still hope, that things would be different from what they are now. However, as you can see, we have reached a very delicate point in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process regarding the accurate and honest implementation of the agreements we signed in Washington and Cairo. I would like to underscore some important points; namely, any retreat on this track will have negative effect on the entire peace process.

As you know, the elections were supposed to take place in July 1994. Now, we are in February and the elections have not taken place yet. These elections were also supposed to be preceded by the relocation and withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all populated areas in the rest of the West Bank and by the assumption of powers.

Regrettably, I would like to remind all that the pretext or excuse that was used in the beginning—when we tried to expedite these matters—was that there are no sacred dates, as some Israeli leaders said. In other words, the dates, which we signed in Cairo and Washington, are not sacred. Then the other excuse was that the National Authority [NA] is incapable of paying the expenses of the second phase. I would like to remind everyone again that we went to the conference of donor states in Brussels where we tackled this problem. An agreement was reached, in accordance with which the donor states will grant the NA urgent expenses for six continuous months.

Now they are using the pretext of violent operations against citizens, whether Palestinians or Israelis. Such operations were carried out in Hebron, Bet Lid, Tel Aviv, and other places. We did not stop the negotiations because of the Hebron massacre, although our losses were great. Since the signing of the first agreement in Washington, 238 Palestinians have fallen as martyrs and 112 Israeli have been killed. The Palestinian losses are bigger. By this, I do not want to justify such violent actions. Why was it called the reconciliation of the courageous? It was called this in order that we might have enough courage to stand up to all the negative elements created by all the extremist forces on both sides, to stand up to them for the sake of our children, for the sake of the future generations, and for the sake of the region's future.

I came to Paris to attend a Paris symposium in which French Prime Minister Balladur, the French foreign minister, [Egyptian Foreign Minister] 'Amr Musa, and [Israeli Foreign Minister] Peres participated. The symposium was also addressed by television by President Husni Mubarak, His Majesty King Husayn, and other important men from the region, Europe, the Middle East, and the Arab world. They all came here to discuss the future of the western, eastern, northern, and southern parts of the Mediterranean basin in light of the peace process. If the peace process is facing some trouble, then what kind of peace are we talking about?

[Correspondent] Your Excellency President Yasir 'Arafat: You are going to chair a PLO Executive Committee meeting in Cairo tomorrow to assess the overall peace process, which you have repeatedly asserted constitutes a strategic option....

['Arafat, interrupting] We are still asserting that.

[Correspondent] What are the bases of the planned assessment, and what methods will you use to try to save the negotiations from their current crisis?

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['Arafat] In fact, we will first hold a meeting of the PLO Executive Committee. The Council of Ministers of the NA requested that I call an urgent meeting of the PLO Executive Committee. Indeed, I have called that meeting, and it will be held in Cairo tomorrow, God willing. We have chosen Cairo because it is close to our land. You know that we will bring the ministers from several places like the Gulf, Gaza, Tunis, Amman, and Britain. So, we have chosen Cairo for the urgent meeting to assess the results in light of the recent facts. I cannot foresee any decisions, but this is an important meeting.

[Correspondent] Your Excellency the President: Today the spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry announced that the negotiations are not facing a crisis, and that your complaint is about the manner in which the negotiations are taking place and not on the peace process itself. The spokesman also said that there are no other options available to the Palestinian and Israeli sides.

['Arafat] Why? Did they not read the agreement they signed. The elections were supposed to be held three months after our start. This means in July 1994. July, August, September, October, November, December, January, and February have passed. This means that there has been an eight-month delay. We demanded accurate and honest commitment to what was agreed upon, unless they think that elections are not important to us and that the withdrawal from the populated areas and redeployment in the West Bank are not important. These are basic things for the peace process.

[Correspondent] President Yasir 'Arafat: Yitzhaq Rabin showed readiness to transfer powers in the West Bank to you, but he linked the transfer of powers to the ability of the Palestinian Authority to ensure security. They are asking a great deal from you, such as resisting and disarming opposition organizations.

['Arafat] Why? Was he able to disarm the huge demonstration staged by Kach in memory of Goldstein, who committed the crime in the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron? I think the celebration and demonstrations they made and the weapons they were carrying are the best evidence that Rabin is unable...[pauses] No one can say that he has a magic wand. The Israelis have full capabilities, and we still do not have such capabilities. However, two days ago, Peres testified at the symposium that we were able to prevent eight operations, in addition to other measures we took in order to control the situation, but I do not have a magic wand. Have they, with all their capabilities, been able to stop...? [sentence incomplete as heard] Can the United States, with all its power, control the security situation 100 percent? Tell me of any country that does not have security problems.

[Correspondent] The Palestinian opposition groups are charging that you will perform this task. You have apprehended many supporters of all opposition factions.

['Arafat] Yes, I have to be clear on that. When the PLO signed the agreement, it did so on behalf of the Palestinian people. So, let us altogether effect a reconciliation, or fight altogether. I would like to ask them why they do not carry out operations from other areas.

[Correspondent] From inside the occupied territories, you mean?

['Arafat] Why don't they carry out operations from the Syrian borders, or the Jordanian borders? Or do they view the National Authority as the weak party? Is this the agreement we had with them?

[Correspondent] Western countries, as well as wealthy Arab states with financial surpluses, have made big promises to you. They promised to extend economic and financial aid to you....

['Arafat, interrupting] This applies to all world states, and not only to the Arab states.

[Correspondent] Yes.

['Arafat] These are the donors [preceding word in English].

[Correspondent] Up to now, it seems that only a few of these promises have been honored. In your opinion, is this to be attributed to the lack of political will on the part of the donor states? Or are these states endeavoring to put pressure on you to make you offer more?

['Arafat] You can say that all these factors are true.

[Correspondent] How can you explain the big disparity between the promises made and the aid received?

['Arafat] You have to take all these considerations into account. Some of the reasons are connected with pressure, while others reflect a mere failure to fulfill obligations. However, I would like to tell you something: We are not the only party to which promises were broken. Can you tell me the name of a single Third World country that has managed to obtain all that it wanted. [laughter] Have you forgotten that we are a Third World country?

[Correspondent] You are facing a devastated economy, thanks to the occupation. This is a moral international responsibility that must be shouldered.

['Arafat] This economy has been premeditatedly destroyed by the occupation authorities. The devastation in question is sweeping. We are starting from scratch; and this is an international responsibility. It is our hope that the world will shoulder its responsibilities toward the Palestinian people, and that it will help the Palestinian people rebuild their infrastructure, which has been destroyed by the occupation.

[Correspondent] Mr. President: Are you planning to leave Gaza and settle down in Tunis, as has been circulated by some press reports?

['Arafat] I would like to tell you one thing. There is only one return home for me. And I have returned home. The

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only thing that [words indistinct] is that I die in my homeland. Nobody leaves his home.

[Correspondent] President Yasir 'Arafat: Do you not fear that the majority of PLO Executive Committee members might tomorrow decide to halt or suspend the negotiations, or demand a return to blanket negotiations?

['Arafat] The PLO Executive Committee is the authority that is higher than the National Authority. When the Council of Ministers of the National Authority called the PLO Executive Committee into a session, it did so because the Executive Committee is the higher authority. As such, it has the right to make the decisions it deems appropriate.

[Correspondent] Is a halt to the negotiations or a suspension of the negotiations a possibility....

['Arafat, interrupting] Only God knows. I cannot make predictions in this regard. Otherwise, [words indistinct]. Only a short while ago, you voiced charges. Do not accuse me of being undemocratic. I cannot make predictions about things that have not yet taken place. Nonetheless, I would like to say something. It must be clear that the Palestine question is at the heart of the Middle East conflict. If this question is not resolved in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, the consequences will be difficult for all.

[Correspondent] The march is tiresome, and the difficulties are huge. What do you have to say to your people, who are suffering with you?

['Arafat] This is the people who gave birth to giants. I would like to remind them of the following proverb "The mountain is not rocked by winds." This is the land-...[pauses] We have called this peace the peace of the brave. Why did we do so? This is because we need true courage to put it into effect.

[Correspondent] Thank you, Mr. President.

Abu-Rudaynah Cited on 'Arafat's Talks

JN1902144195 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1400 GMT 19 Feb 95

[Interview with Nabil Abu-Rudaynah, spokesman for the Palestinian Authority, by Fathi al-Barqawi; place and date not given—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [al-Barqawi] Brother Nabil Abu-Rudaynah, official spokesman of the [Palestinian] National Authority, you are welcome.

[Abu-Rudaynah] Thank you, brother Fathi.

[Al-Barqawi] President Yasir 'Arafat held several meetings in Paris with the French prime minister, Israeli Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres, and Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa. He also participated in a quadrilateral meeting attended by the French premier. Can you tell us about the results?

[Abu-Rudaynah] Upon his arrival in Paris yesterday evening, 'Arafat met with French Premier Balladur at the prime minister's office. During the one-hour meeting, discussion dealt with the latest results of the Cairo and Washington meetings and the meetings on the Palestinian border. Brother Abu-'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat] briefed the French premier on the latest talks in this regard. He also informed him of Israel's stalling and delays in implementing the agreements. The session of talks was important and positive. The French premier reiterated his support for the peace process and for the Palestinian efforts in this regard. He also reiterated Europe's readiness to contribute toward rectifying matters and to support the peace process.

The French prime minister then convened a quadrilateral meeting among President Abu-'Ammar, Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, and Mr. Peres on the sidelines of the conference. It lasted about 30 minutes, after which it was decided to hold a tripartite Palestinian-Egyptian-Israeli session of talks. The meeting was held at 0100 today, Paris time. Abu-'Ammar, Mr. Musa, and Mr. Peres met for one hour.

The Palestinian side declined to reveal any details on this issue, which prompted Mr. Peres and Mr. Musa to hold a separate news conference.

As you are aware, the Palestinian stand is clear. In all of his meetings, President Abu-'Ammar demanded the implementation of all agreements reached, led by the agreement to hold the elections as soon as possible, the redeployment and withdrawal of the Israeli Army, the release of detainees, and ending the closure and siege on Gaza. He regarded these issues as priorities that should be implemented and adhered to.

As I told you, no official comment or statement was issued after these meetings. However, the Palestinian stand was clear. The responsibility was fully placed on the Israeli side. The Palestinian side asked the Israeli side to implement what was agreed on in Cairo, Washington, and Oslo.

As you are aware, a session of talks will be held tomorrow morning with President Mitterrand, there will be a meeting with Foreign Minister Juppe, and then the President will return home.

[Al-Barqawi] Thank you brother Nabil.

Sha'th Proposes Moving to 'Final Status' Talks

JN2102090995 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0600 GMT 21 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Dr. Nabil Sha'th, minister of planning and international cooperation in the Palestinian Authority has proposed that talks with Israel

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should, as of now, deal with the final status of the Palestinian lands in keeping with the Declaration of Principles.

In a news conference he held yesterday on the fringes of the Paris symposium on peace, Sha'th said if Israel did not agree to resolve outstanding problems within the framework of talks on the interim stage, the only solution would be to discuss the final status of the Palestinian lands.

He added that this proposal should be discussed seriously because the standstill in the peace process is very costly. He said: In this way, we can settle problems facing us in the current stage of talks like Jerusalem, settlements, and borders.

Dr. Sha'th said that talks on the interim status of Palestinian lands could make progress parallel with final status talks.

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Algeria

FIS Sources Doubt Reports of Thwarted Coup Plan

MM1702173295 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 17 Feb 95 pp 1, 4

[Report by Kamil al-Tawil: "Algeria: New Campaign Against Salvation Front Reflected in Summoning of Released Shaykhs"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] London—Over the past 24 hours, the Algerian authorities continued their campaign against the Islamic Salvation Front [FIS] leaders. Having moved Shaykh Ali Belhadj to a prison deep in the desert about two weeks ago, it has been learned, they have summoned a number of the released shaykhs, who are members of the National Shura Council, to police stations. AL-HAYAH has also learned that the security forces prevented Shaykh Abassi Madani's son Oqbah from visting his father in the Ain el Najah military hospital in the capital. It was not known if that was because the FIS leader had also been moved to the same desert prison as Belhadj.

AL-HAYAH has learned that the Algerian police sent "summonses" to a number of FIS leaders asking them to report to police stations but they did not respond to that request. It was not known whether the purpose was to inform the shaykhs that they must not engage in any political activity, or had something to do with detaining them again. [passage omitted]

AL-HAYAH has received information that the reason Macani and Belhadj were moved to the desert was to keep them away from any developments which might occur in the capital.

The Algerian authorities are shrouding their measures against the FIS leaders in extreme secrecy, giving rise to numerous speculations as to what is really going on. Perhaps the most important speculation circulating in Algerian circles is the one about involvement of the two FIS leaders in a plan that was under preparation with the aim of carrying out a military coup that would topple the current regime, but, in a statement to AL-HAYAH, Algerian official sources have denied these reports. FIS sources have also said that they doubted the possibility of involvement of the two shaykhs in such a plot to overthrow the regime particularly as they were under 24-hour watch when they were under house arrest in the Djenan el Mufti villa attached to the presidency.

Despite the denial and the doubts, the reports about plans for a coup cannot be ignored. FIS had from the beginning bet on the possibility of settling the conflict by winning over some Army officers, especially junior officers who suffer most of the losses in the confrontation with the armed Islamic groups and whose disgruntlement could, therefore, be exploited in attempts to persuade them to disobey their commanders and to join the groups in the mountains. But that strategy did not succeed and, despite some dissensions in some areas and some "treason" by some members of the security forces who collaborated with the gunmen, the Algerian Army has been very cohesive throughout the crisis. Algerian official sources emphasize that the Algerian Army is united and there is no chance of dividing it. They also deny that there is a "moderate wing" and "an eradicationist wing" in the Army despite some indications to the contrary. [passage omitted]

Reportage on Murders, Security Forces' Actions

Security Forces Kill 39 'Criminals'

LD1702190795 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1830 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] In a statement today, the security services announced that the security forces have eliminated 39 criminals, including a leader of a criminal group and an escapee from Tazult prison. This took place in the provinces of Tizi Ouzou, Algiers, Chlef, Taref, Batna, Constantine, Skikda, and Blida in a series of operations carried out by the security forces between last Tuesday and Thursday.

The security forces also managed to recover a quantity of weapons and communications equipment during the above operations.

Murderers of Women's Group Leader Killed

LD1802174695 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The security services announced yesterday that their forces killed five terrorists at Moukhalfa in Tizi Ouzou two days ago. The same sources stated that the five criminals who were eliminated, including the leader of the group, were the perpetrators of the murderous crime against Nabila Djahnine, leader of the Women's Outcry feminist association.

8 'Criminals' 'Eliminated'

LD1802195795 Algiers ENTV Television Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] In a statement released today, the security services said that during an extensive search operation its forces had eliminated eight criminals in the provinces of Boumerdes, Batna, Blida, Chlef, and Souk Ahras. A quantity of weapons had been recovered.

Journalist in Gdyel Murdered

LD1702144195 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1400 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The security services have announced that Djamel Ziater, a journalist working for the daily EL DJOUMHOURIA published in western Algeria, was shot dead early this afternoon in Gdyel, situated 20 km east of Oran. The late Djamel Ziater was

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killed at Gdyel cemetery while he was visiting his mother's grave. He was 35 and single and had been working for the newspaper since 1986.

War Veteran 'Assassinated'

LD1902173695 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] A statement released by the security services today said that the national liberation war veteran Benmahfoud Ali, 55 years old, was assassinated by armed terrorists last Thursday at 1800 hours in Bir Khadem [Algiers district].

Another statement by the security services today said security forces had eliminated 22 criminals in various search operations in central and western Algeria. The statement affirmed that following these operations, the security forces recovered a quantity of weapons.

GIA Claims Killing of Intellectuals, Tunisian Police

NC2002103795 Paris AFP in English 0931 GMT 20 Feb 95

[Spelling of all names as received]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Algiers, Feb 20 (AFP)—Algeria's radical Islamic Armed Group [GIA] claims in its latest weekly news bulletin that it is responsible for the killing of several Algerian cultural figures and six Tunisian police officers, the daily Tribune reported here Monday [20 February].

The paper said that in the bulletin called All-Ansar and published Friday, the GIA claims responsibility for last week's slaying of Azeddine Medjoubi, the director of the Algerian National Theater, of Abdelhafid Said, a student leader, and of Nabila Djahnine, the head of a feminist organisation.

The group said Medjoubi and Said were killed because they were "communists" and Djahnine because she headed an association that championed women's rights.

The GIA also claimed that some of its militants crossed into Tunisia last week and attacked a local police station, killing seven officers.

The attack, it added, was meant as a message to Tunisian authorities who it charged were "oppressing" fundamentalists in that country.

Tunisian authorities have denied that the attack took place although it was reported in a French daily and a local newspaper.

The GIA is the most hardline of the fundamentalist movements that have waged war on the secular military-backed government for the past three years. The group has targeted many civilians, including foreign nationals, during the conflict that has claimed an estimated 30,000 lives.

The fighting began after the army intervened in January 1992 to cancel the second round of general elections the now outlawed Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win.

Demonstrations in Paris Against Violence Against Women

LD1802214695 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in French 1800 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Several hundred people demonstrated in Paris this afternoon in protest against, among other things, violence against women in Algeria. We will never keep quiet, demonstrators shouted. They peppered the demonstration with singing and wailing, and brandished the photographs of victims of terrorist violence in Algeria.

Algerian women's associations had organized this demonstration with the support of anti-racist organizations and women's defense movements.

Road, Rail Infrastructure Bombed

LD1902142495 Paris Radio France International in French 1230 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The Algerian press this morning reports on a series of bomb attacks against road and rail infrastructures over the last few days, on Algiers heights among other places.

A goods train has been derailed between Birtouta and Boufarik, south of the capital, after the railway was sabotaged. This is reported by the newspaper EL WATAN.

Foreign Ministry Denies Joint Maneuvers With Israel

LD2002190895 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1830 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The Foreign Ministry's official spokesman denied reports of Algeria's participation in military naval maneuvers in the Mediterranean, with the participation of Israel.

Quoting Israeli sources, foreign a news agency said that these manoeuvres would take place under Canada's supervision, and that Israel and a number of Arab states, including Algeria, would take part in them.

The Foreign Ministry's spokesman denied these reports and questioned the motives of those who spread such unfounded allegations.

Zeroual Receives Former Prime Minister Malek

LD1902083795 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 0700 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Three groups of national figures have been to the presidency since Mr. Liamine Zeroual, the head of state, opened the door for consultations on how to prepare for the forthcoming presidential elections.

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The Head of State yesterday received Messrs Mohamed Laid Annan, Ali Haroun and Reda Malek. He had already received six public figures. It is expected that he will continue his consultations with other national figures until the list of 30 figures is exhausted. Once this goal is achieved, national public opinion will be informed on the content of the consultations and their outcome.

Tenes Port Dock Workers End Strike Action

LD1702131695 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1130 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] On the dock workers' strike, the provincial office in Chelf has announced that the strike that dock workers in the port of Tenes began on 10 February ended yesterday following an agreement between the managing director and trade union representatives. The agreement between the management and the workers stipulated an immediate return to work and the settlement of the wage issue.

Ministers Inspect Algiers Port, Urge End to Strike

LD1802091795 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 0700 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The ministers of commerce, labor, and social protection and transport visited Algiers port to assess the developments of the situation resulting from the strike, especially the unloading of widely-consumed goods.

The three ministers met representatives of the port management and the striking workers. They urged both sides, management and trade union, to strictly implement the court ruling that was issued mid-February, explained Issi, the port management's liaison officer:

[Begin Issi recording] Having seen that the strike had continued and entered its first week, the ministers of commerce, labor, and social protection and transport urged the trade union and the port management to strictly implement the ruling of the court issued on 15 February 1995 by Algiers court to guarantee a minimum service according to the law of February 1990, Article 37.

The ministers also urged the parties to bring their positions closer to find a quick settlement for this strike. [end recording]

Algiers Port Workers End Strike

LD1802211895 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in French 1800 GMT 18 Feb 95

[Italicized passages are recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Announcer] People are heaving a sigh of relief in the port of Algiers—work will resume tomorrow after the trade union and management reached a compromise on the status of the workers in the port of the capital this afternoon. The grade of these workers has been raised from one to one point six, which is an intermediary solution given the fact that they were demanding the same status as that of tanker terminals at the beginning.

Other pending issues, such as the make-up of the teams and incentives—which are secondary issues—will be tackled later on by arbitration commissions.

Let us now listen to the reactions of the two sides, and first of all that of Said Hadad, the secretary general of the union of the port of Algiers:

[Hadad] *We have reached an agreement, and work will resume tomorrow morning. The commissions are going to start working. I think that it is sad that...[pauses] there is no victor, we are the losers, and I hope that work will resume tomorrow. God willing, solutions will be found to all problems.* [preceding sentence in Arabic]

[Announcer] The following is the reaction of Mr. Salah, the director general of Algiers port:

[Salah] *Management have agreed to raise the grade by 60 percent and to refer the case to an arbitration commission, which will give its verdict within one month—45 days at the most. God willing [preceding words in Arabic] I think that we have come out of this [word indistinct] and I think that the commission is to start working soon because other commissions are expected to work too, on the make-up of the teams and [word indistinct] incentives among other things, together with the [words indistinct].*

[Announcer] People have thus heaved a sigh of relief in the port of Algiers. Work is going to resume after a one-week long strike.

Egypt

Musa Discusses Paris Symposium, Peace Process

NC1902082795 Cairo Voice of the Arabs in Arabic 0610 GMT 19 Feb 95

[Telephone interview with Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, in Paris, by Ramadan Husayn, in Cairo, on 19 February—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Husayn] Your Excellency, we wish to welcome you to the Voice of the Arabs. Good morning.

[Musa] Good morning to you.

[Husayn] Could you please tell us about the symposium you are attending in Paris and the issues that are being discussed?

[Musa] It is a symposium for an exchange of views on issues related to the Middle East's political settlement and the future of the region. Many such symposiums have been held. What makes this one especially significant are the circumstances currently surrounding the

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peace process and the problems that have been raised as a result of the failure to implement the Palestinian-Israeli agreement and the lack of progress on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli negotiating tracks. This is the point that has imparted such significance to this symposium at this particular time. The participants include the various negotiating partners, that is, the parties of the Madrid process, who will take part in a discussion over various points of the political settlement program and, naturally, the Israeli nuclear program.

[Husayn] Mr. Minister, you are attending this symposium in the wake of your tour of several European countries and the United States. Do you sense any fresh momentum to revive the Middle East peace process, particularly after the recent tension in the Palestinian-Israeli track?

[Musa] Of course. There is such a momentum and it is being encouraged by all the countries I have recently visited. All of them are determined that the peace operation should continue. This is a good attitude. They wish to eliminate any obstacles in the way. Of course, they understand who is responsible for the tension and know how to try to remedy matters.

[Husayn] Mr. Minister, the recent meeting between Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin that was held in the wake of the Washington meeting did not achieve any specific results on the still unresolved problems on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

[Musa] The meeting failed to solve the major problems but did indeed solve several minor issues. The major problems still exist and will become increasingly conspicuous. Unless progress is made toward solving them, the peace process will definitely suffer a setback.

[Husayn] Your Excellency, have you discussed with Israeli Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres, who is attending the Paris symposium, ways of reactivating the regional peace operation?

[Musa] Certainly, this was a basic part of our discussion.

[Husayn] What results were achieved?

[Musa] We will not make announcements while both of us are here attending this symposium in Paris. When he returns to his country, he will convey to his government what I told him and they will discuss it there.

[Husayn] Your Excellency, is there anything new on the Syrian-Israeli negotiating track?

[Musa] No, there is nothing new so far.

[Husayn] Minister, the issue of Israel joining the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty continues to be a major affair that provokes considerable problems. From what principle does Egypt move in handling this issue?

[Musa] Egypt's principle on this matter is well-known. It is necessary to confront an existing nuclear program in the region and this must be done by joining existing international agreements.

[Husayn] Is Israel showing any responsiveness in this connection?

[Musa] Very intensive contacts are being made on this matter between us and several other countries, including Israel. We are trying to make some progress on this affair. We are doing this in a professional, precise manner.

[Husayn] What is the U.S. attitude on this matter?

[Musa] The United States, of course, supports global compliance with the treaty and wishes to maintain it as a basis for nonproliferation. When I was in Washington, they listened attentively to my presentation of this problem's components and ways of remedying it. I believe that they have now begun efforts to revive this treaty.

[Husayn] Minister, one last question. How do you envisage the future of the Middle East and the mechanisms that might...?

[Musa, interrupting] Everything hinges on whether the peace process succeeds or fails.

[Husayn] Yes. Brother listeners, at the end of this interview we thank Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, with whom we have been talking over the phone between Cairo and Paris. Thank you, your Excellency.

[Musa] Thanks to you.

Foreign Minister Returns From Overseas Visits

NC1902223595 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2155 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 19 Feb (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa returned to Cairo this evening from Rome after a tour of several days in which he visited Japan, the United States, France, Italy, and Germany.

Upon his return, 'Amr Musa stated that he will submit a report to President Husni Mubarak about the results of his tour and meetings during his visit of the five countries.

He said that he went to Italy to meet its new prime minister and exchange views on the issue of the Mediterranean Sea, the next ministerial committee, the peace process, and some other topics of mutual interest.

Answering a question on statements that were reportedly made in Israel today that it has agreed to open up its nuclear installations for inspection and to exchange experts with Egypt in an attempt to settle the conflict over signing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT], 'Amr Musa said that he has not read these statements yet. He said that he had had very frank discussions on this matter

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with Israeli Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres during his meeting with him in Washington and later in Paris.

He clarified that contacts continue to draw out the Israeli stand and study what needs to be done, as well as to decide the framework within which progress should be made.

Answering another question on the NPT, the foreign minister said that all contacts continue and that they are discussing this matter through the newspapers, statements, and communiques. He pointed out that serious issues like this one must be discussed through contacts like the ones taking place currently at a very serious level, because this matter is related to regional security. He noted that contacts in this regard are extensive.

On the criticism emerging from Israel regarding Egyptian diplomacy and asked whether his meeting with Shim'on Peres presented a chance to clarify Israel's stand, 'Amr Musa said that they had explained their stand in this regard. Egypt's stand was decisive, absolute, and clear in this regard. It is the stand we have expressed at the highest levels.

The foreign minister noted President Husni Mubarak's statements on this matter. He affirmed that Egypt cannot retreat on any issue relating to its higher interests or regional interests.

On Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat's meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin and Israeli Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres, 'Amr Musa said that he will not comment on the results of these meetings because bilateral meetings are still going on between.

Answering a question on the next meeting among the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel, the foreign minister said that the meeting will be held during the last week of February. He pointed out that he will contact Jordanian Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti to set the final date.

On reports on NATO's contacts with North African countries regarding security cooperation and confrontation of the terrorist currents, 'Amr Musa answered that this subject was raised during his tour. It seems there is some inaccuracy regarding this matter. There are no proposals, only some ideas.

The foreign minister pointed out that he will meet with the NATO secretary general to discuss this matter with him.

On the Syrian and Lebanese peace process tracks, 'Amr Musa said at the conclusion of his statements that there are Syrian-U.S. contacts currently taking place. There might be some negotiations or other contacts on this track later.

Briefs Mubarak

NC2002124395 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1140 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Feb (MENA)—President Husni Mubarak received a report today from Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa on the outcome of the tour in which he visited Japan, the United States, Germany, France, and Italy.

Following a two-hour meeting with the president in the Presidential Office today, Musa said that there are continuing diplomatic efforts to resume the peace process and discuss other issues related to current developments in the region.

Musa noted in his statement that President Mubarak will visit Japan and the United States soon, pointing out that Egyptian diplomatic efforts will continue to consolidate the peace process and regional stability in accordance with the declared Egyptian positions.

Asked whether views on the signing of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT] were brought closer during his tour, Musa replied that intensive discussions and contacts were held in this connection during the tour. He added that the contacts continue and that there are proposals under consideration. The issue has undoubtedly been brought to the fore, he remarked.

Musa was asked about the U.S. explanations concerning the Middle Eastern states' signing of the NPT and the absence of a condition stipulating Israel's signing. He said that it has become clear that if a request is made to join the treaty it will involve all, because all are called on to sign. He added that Egypt has no objection to this.

The foreign minister was asked about the Israeli proposal to let Egyptian experts visit a number of Israeli reactors. He replied that these proposals were part of the ongoing contacts and consultations. I do not want to go into detail right now, he said.

Musa reiterated that Egypt's position on the NPT is clear and that he does not have to repeat what was declared before.

Replying to a question on the recent Israeli attack against any Egyptian rejection of Israeli positions, Musa said: We made our response to that attack.

Asked what the Egyptian position would be if the United States succeeded in getting enough states to ratify the NPT extension, he remarked that each individual state assumes its own position on signing. What concerns us is the Israeli nuclear program, he said, noting that there is a connection between this program and the NPT.

Musa pointed out that Egypt has no objection to the NPT as such, but to Israel's position on it. We will consider this matter later, once we know the outcome of the ongoing contacts, he said.

Asked about Egypt's role in enhancing the peace process and whether there is an American move to give a push to negotiations on the Palestinian-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli tracks, Musa affirmed that enhancing peace efforts is an ongoing process. He said that efforts continue on all the tracks and that there is a chance of making positive moves.

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The foreign minister was asked about the nature of these moves in light of the demand some people are making on Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat to return to Tunis in case of failure to make progress on the Palestinian-Israeli track. He said: Sustaining the peace process is a necessity. As far as 'Arafat's statements are concerned, Egypt supports any step 'Arafat takes, he said.

Musa added that Egypt supports 'Arafat's recent appeal to Egypt and a number of European states to intervene to save the peace process. The foreign minister emphasized that the peace process involves texts, rules, and provisions which must be observed, including the Palestinian elections and the redeployment of Israeli troops. He added that these two matters involve other details, like opening borders between Israel and Gaza, which was done yesterday. What remains now are the issues of redeployment and elections, he said.

Asked about the possibility of holding an Arab minisummit, as announced recently in Amman, Musa said: The possibility of holding such a summit always exists. However, he added, there is no agreed date for it.

Asked if Arab states support Egypt's position on NPT, he affirmed that they certainly support Egypt's position, which is a regional position. He pointed out that each state looks at the treaty from its own perspective and in light of the threat that the [Israeli] nuclear program poses to it.

Touching on Egyptian-U.S. relations, Musa described them as "very good."

The foreign minister was asked if the Syrian-Israeli track has reached a freeze. He said: It absolutely has not.

Musa Expresses Concern Over NATO Meeting on 'Militants'

NC2002122895 Paris AFP in English 1157 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, Feb 20 (AFP)—Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa expressed reservations Monday [20 February] about a NATO-organised meeting his country is scheduled to attend with Israel to discuss the dangers of "violent extremism."

Musa told newspapers that joint efforts to fight fundamentalist violence "cannot be discussed in this way, and we cannot understand the framework in which the issue has been presented."

He said he would meet soon with Willy Claes, general secretary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), to express Egypt's reservations.

Claes said he would meet Friday in Brussels with ambassadors of Morocco, Mauritania, Egypt, Tunisia and Israel to open "dialogue" on extremism.

They would discuss "proposals on the problems of security threatened by violent extremism," he said.

Egyptian authorities are battling against an Islamic militant anti-government campaign which has left more than 660 people dead since it began in March 1992, but consider it an internal matter.

Libya on Sunday warned the four Arab countries of "the dangerous implications of their participation alongside Israel at a meeting concerning internal affairs."

Israeli Envoy Hands Memo to Foreign Ministry

NC1902175395 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1700 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 19 Feb (MENA)—Jamal al-Bayyumi, head of the Israel Department at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, met today with David Sultan, the Israeli ambassador in Cairo. The ambassador said he handed the Egyptian Foreign Ministry a memorandum from the Israeli Government explaining remarks attributed to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin before the Knesset Foreign Affairs Committee.

The ambassador said that the memorandum explained that the Israeli prime minister mentioned that Egypt and Israel have not yet reached a common understanding on the issue of nuclear nonproliferation. He added that the prime minister affirmed the need to enhance dialogue and cooperation with Egypt because Egyptian-Israeli relations are the cornerstone for building peace in the region. The prime minister is also fully convinced that bilateral relations are strong enough to withstand any difficulties.

The Israeli ambassador explained that he discussed with al- Bayyumi ways of strengthening relations between the two countries in the various fields. He also stated that the Israeli-Palestinian Election Committee will meet in Cairo on Tuesday [21 February] and Wednesday to complete discussions on the elections.

Peres Invited to Cairo for Talks 'Very Soon'

NC2002081595 Paris AFP in English 0715 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Jerusalem, Feb 20 (AFP)—Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres has been invited to Cairo "very soon" by Egyptian President Husni Mubarak in a bid to settle the crisis over the renewal of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, officials said Monday [20 February].

Mubarak has rallied Arab countries to back his stand that Egypt will refuse to sign the treaty when it comes up for renewal in mid-April unless Israel joins. And Israel steadfastly refuses to do so.

Foreign ministry officials said the talks, for which no date has been set, were aimed at finding a formula to resolve the worst crisis in relations with Egypt since the 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

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"Egypt knows full well that we will not sign," one ministry official said.

Newspapers reported the talks were agreed when Peres met Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa in Paris at the weekend.

Musa kept the pressure on Israel with a warning of "serious consequences" for the region if the Jewish state remained outside the treaty.

U.S. Envoy Cited on Mubarak Visit, Bilateral Ties

NC1702220295 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2115 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 17 Feb (MENA)—U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Edward Walker has emphasized that achieving peace in the region is inconceivable without President Husni Mubarak's leadership and Egypt's role. He noted that his country regards Egypt's role in achieving peace in the Middle East as vital and primary.

In a statement to be published by AKHBAR AL-YAWM tomorrow, Saturday, he said the United States welcomes President Husni Mubarak's visit to Washington. He added that President Clinton had sent an invitation for President Mubarak to visit the United States and that President Mubarak will fix a date for the visit soon. He remarked that the visit will enhance the two countries' relations.

Walker praised Egyptian-U.S. relations, describing them as strong, progressing well, and built on equality, noting that no party conceals its view from the other, which is a healthy sign.

The U.S. ambassador said there are no strong relations without variance in views.

Government 'Source' on Results of Taba Meeting

NC1802181695 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1700 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 18 Feb (MENA)—A responsible source at the Foreign Ministry has stated that a report published in the 14 February issue of AL-SHA'B, the mouthpiece of the opposition Labor Party, on the Taba conference [grouping trade ministers from Egypt, the United States, Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority] is groundless. The source pointed out that not one paragraph in the report corresponds to the truth.

The source explained that ending the Arab boycott of Israel was not the main topic of the Taba meeting and was not on its agenda. The source pointed out that all there is to the subject is that the U.S. side asked that the investors accompanying the U.S. delegation be reassured that their firms and companies would not be prone to a boycott should they decide to deal with the countries represented at the meeting, including Israel. The source added: Since the three Arab parties taking part in the meeting have already concluded peace agreements with Israel, none of the delegations thought that adding a paragraph welcoming the termination of the boycott of Israel would constitute a concession or a retreat from their original stances. This is especially true since this special paragraph dealing with the boycott followed the Israeli delegation's agreement to add another paragraph welcoming the signing of the trade and economic agreement concluded between the PLO and Israel in Paris. The agreement exempts exports from Egypt and Jordan to the Palestinian territories from any regulations pertaining to the import rules in Israel and allows for exports from Egypt and Jordan to enter the Palestinian Authority's territories directly.

The source noted that this will allow the Rafah crossing point to be used for exporting Egyptian products directly to Gaza, which is an Egyptian-Palestinian demand the fulfillment of which was one of the most important achievements at the Taba meeting. The source went on to say that the statement issued by the Taba meeting clearly welcomes the Paris agreement and calls on its parties to proceed with its implementation. The source added: Apart from this, no one asked Egypt, Jordan, or Palestine during the meeting to mediate with the other Arab states to end the boycott imposed on Israel, sidestep the boycott enforcement agencies affiliated with the Arab League, or raise any of the other points mentioned by AL-SHA'B.

The Taba meeting led to some important results, the source stressed, primarily, opening the Rafah crossing point to Egyptian exports to Gaza, exempting them from Israeli customs duty, and securing an agreement between Egyptian and U.S. businessmen to set up projects in the fields of construction, housing, petroleum, gas, road building, and others. The source added that another important result from the meeting was the promotion of Egyptian exports in the Palestinian territories. As far as the Israeli side is concerned, it was agreed to overcome the difficulties obstructing land transport, thus easing direct land transport between Egypt and Jordan promptly.

Writer Urges 'Fair' U.S. Stance on Arabs, Israel

NC1702160195 Cairo AL-AHRAM in Arabic 13 Feb 95 p 4

["Foreign Policy" column by 'Abd-al-'Azim Hammad: "The United States, Presidents, and Peoples"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Irrespective of the declared or undeclared results of the Washington meetings that began yesterday among the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel, and under the auspices of President Bill Clinton himself, there is a more general and more important result that the Arab peoples expect from these meetings. We do not exaggerate when we say that much of the future of this region depends on these

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meetings. What the Arab peoples—forget the governments for now—expect from the Washington meetings is long overdue proof provided by U.S. policy that it is capable of showing fairness between these peoples and Israel. The nature of this proof is specified in the two most important issues on the agenda of the four ministers' meeting shared with the U.S. secretary of state: saving the Israeli-Palestinian Agreement and Israel joining the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Washington can pressure the Arabs in these two issues in favor of Israel. It can also convince—we are not saying pressure—Israel to show the necessary flexibility on these two issues, because Israel's stance, which is required to change, is unfair and unjustified. Israel wants to shirk its obligations in the agreement with the Palestinians and insists on being given a unique position, unmatched anywhere, regarding the Treaty.

We require that the Washington meetings demonstrate to us that the United States is not a proxy [wakil] for Israel and talks to us on its behalf, good or bad. It is high time the United States did this, because the Arabs are entering peaceful relations with Israel. Just as the war had its own logic, peace must also have its own logic. It is also high time the United States stopped playing the role of proxy for Israel, right or wrong, because no longer do we have a situation in which any Arab country is befriending a rival superpower, as was the case during the Cold War when the United States used this pretext to justify its absolute alignment with Israel.

If the U.S. policymakers choose not to learn the lessons of the past and, instead of being fair between the Arabs and Israel, opt to use their old weapons, assailing the Arab rulers and presidents who do now bow to pressure in favor of Israel, the United States would lose the last chance to win the Arab peoples' trust in its integrity and in the benefit of its friendship.

People's Assembly Committee Backs Cairo NPT Stance

NC2002180595 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1255 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Feb (MENA)—The People's Assembly's Arab Affairs Committee has stated its absolute support for the honorable and patriotic stand of the Egyptian foreign policy led by President Husni Mubarak and for his demand that all countries without exception sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT], including Israel. It said it supports the need for Israel to agree to inspection of its nuclear installations, especially as it has a nuclear project near the Egyptian borders. The committee pointed out that any exceptions to compliance with the NPT would inevitably lead to a nuclear arms race, chaos, and instability in the region.

A statement released after its meeting today under Committee Chairman Dr. Tulbah 'Uwydah says that the aggressive and provocative statements by the Israeli prime minister and foreign minister are aimed at instigating a crisis with Egypt as a pretext to justify its refusal to sign the NPT and to avoid implementing the agreements it concluded with the Palestinians in Oslo and Cairo.

The Arab Affairs Committee called on all Arab countries to coordinate their efforts and take a unified national and pan-Arab stand on this extremely serious issue. It stressed its support for President Mubarak's initiative to clear the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction so that confidence can be built and the foundations of security and stability laid. It noted the need to strive constantly to bring the views closer on an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights within the framework of a Syrian-Israeli peace agreement and withdrawal from the occupied border strip in south Lebanon as part of an Israeli-Lebanese peace agreement.

Commentary on Israel's Refusal To Sign NPT Treaty

NC1702154195 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1240 GMT 17 Feb 95

[Commentary by Zayn al-Ja'fari: "Israel's Nuclear Weapon and Destroying Confidence"]

[FBIS Translated Text] President Mubarak warned Israel yesterday against creating a crisis with Egypt and stressed that Egypt does not pursue any hostile line against Israel. He said it reserves the right to determine its position on signing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT] if Israel does not sign. Foreign Minister Musa reiterated this position at a meeting the day before yesterday with senior U.S. correspondents and commentators in Washington and in an interview with the Israeli newspaper YEDI'OT AHARONOT. He remarked that any exceptions in complying with the treaty would trigger a nuclear race and anarchy in the region. Musa said that building a new order in the region would not be viable unless weapons of mass destruction were eliminated. This is the essence of President Mubarak's initiative to declare the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction.

It is indisputable that the Middle East peace process is at a very dangerous turn. Stalemate prevails in spite of two attempts to save it. The first attempt was represented in the quadripartite summit meeting in Cairo and the second attempt was made in the meeting held by the quadripartite foreign ministers in Washington under President Clinton's sponsorship.

It was expected that the peace process would regain its lost momentum, since the four states promised to implement all the provisions of the peace agreements signed and to overcome all the obstacles that brought the process almost to a halt. Things were expected to move in that direction, particularly after the summit meeting between Palestinian leader Yasir 'Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin. But the wind does not always carry what we desire. This further complicated things.

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Israel's insistence on not signing the treaty can mean only one thing: Despite all its talk about peace and peaceful existence with Arab neighbors, the course of events is showing beyond doubt that the intentions Israel harbors are different from those it shows. Rather than accept what can help build confidence with the Arabs, Israel adopts positions that can never convince Arab states, never mind the rest of the world, of the soundness of its purposes and intentions. It tries to be seen as the only state in the region that is hypersensitive and so very important for world peace and security. In the meantime it remains the only country to own this type of internationally banned dangerous weapon.

Israel's goal is to make implicit threats and exercise clear extortion to realize its objectives. No state in the region can accept that. Egypt has repeatedly expressed this belief.

We believe that Israeli policymakers must know about two important points that considerably devalue reliance on strategic weapons, especially where Israel is concerned. The first point lies in the smallness of Israel's area, which puts Israel itself at risk if it uses nuclear weapons. The largest number affected by any nuclear strike would come from Israel's population. This prompts us to say that Israel's refusal to join the treaty is a means of threatening to use force. The second, more important, point is that the production of nuclear weapons is no longer an unsolvable problem. Once a country has the means and the funds necessary to buy scientists, who are abundant globally after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, producing nuclear weapons becomes an easy task.

We say that in view of the dangerous state the peace process is going through Israel must reconsider its ownership of a few nuclear warheads or bombs and consent to join the Treaty so that the regional peace process can take its course.

MENA Views Government's Stand on NPT Signing

NC1702200495 Cairo MENA in Arabic 0812 GMT 16 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 16 Feb (MENA)—Egyptian Foreign Ministry's recent contacts have shown mounting Arab and world support for the Egyptian stand on signing the renewal of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT].

These contacts showed a clear Egyptian stand on signing the treaty which demands that Israel sign this treaty as part of the efforts to establish a comprehensive peace in the Middle East so that none of its countries will live under a nuclear threat.

The Egyptian stand is based on the international move on all levels to explain the importance of Israel signing the treaty. It is also based on clear consultations with Israel itself and the United States in the context of peace and its requirements, not confrontation or hostility, and on asking Israel to adopt tangible measures on the treaty confirming its desire for peace.

In its diplomatic contacts with all world powers, Egypt has affirmed that if Israel makes a positive step toward signing the treaty, Egypt will reciprocate with similar positive measures.

Egypt also clarified that maintaining the status quo means the continuation of nuclear threat to Egypt and the region.

Egypt thinks that there is no room for accepting Israel's claims about a potential Iranian nuclear threat or about its suffering from domestic political problems. These claims do not justify Israel's continued possession of nuclear weapons in light of the efforts to establish a comprehensive and just peace in the region.

The NPT came into force in 1970 after five years of consultations and preparatory meetings in which Egypt took part.

Some 170 countries have implemented the treaty and only three countries—India, Pakistan, and Israel—have not signed it. The treaty's duration is 25 years ending this year, so its renewal is under discussion.

As the date of the treaty's renewal in April approaches, divisions still exist over a permanent, open-ended extension. Some 60-70 countries, led by the United States, now support this measure, while about 15 countries, including Egypt, reject it so far and envisage that the extension should be for another 25 years. Other world countries have not yet defined their positions.

India and Pakistan refuse to join the treaty because of political disputes between them as they accuse each other of possessing nuclear weapons.

Israel is the only state in the Middle East that has nuclear weapons which world strategy experts estimate at about 200 tactical and strategic nuclear warheads. This creates disorder in the region's balance of power and constitutes a threat to the efforts aimed at establishing peace and security in the presence of equal powers.

The Egyptian stand on all this is based on two points. First is the need for Israel to sign the new treaty before Egypt will sign. Second, the treaty should not be extended permanently and there must be agreement on extending it for further 25 years to be reviewed according to the changing world conditions and circumstances.

Remand of 12 Muslim Brotherhood Members Renewed

NC1802200295 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1855 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 18 Feb (MENA)—Counselor Hisham Saraya, the attorney general at the Higher State Security Prosecution, has decided to renew

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the remand of 12 defendants from the Muslim Brotherhood for another 15 days for interrogation. The interrogation is being conducted with the knowledge of the prosecution. Topping the members whose remand is extended is Dr. 'Isam al-'Iryan, a member of the Doctors Union. The prosecution decided to release Brotherhood members Dr. Mustafa 'Abd-al-'Alim and Sa'd 'Ismat.

The prosecution, on 19 February, will review the order renewing the remand in custody of 13 other Brotherhood defendants.

The security authorities arrested the defendants and referred them to the State Security Prosecution on charges of joining a group that was established against the law and Constitution, convening a series of organizational meetings of the Brotherhood, the activities of which are banned.

Reportage on Violence in al-Minya Governate

2 Sentries Killed

NC1702153895 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1440 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 17 Feb (MENA)—Unidentified assailants fire on and killed two regular sentries in the village of Atqa in Markaz Mallawi, al-Minya, today.

An official Interior Ministry source said the two sentries, Hifzi Muhammad al-Mahdi and Muhammad Jamal Sayyid Muhammad, were on their way to the Atqa Police Station when the unidentified people shot them. They died of their wounds.

Leading officials in the al-Minya Security Directorate, the various detective agencies, and the criminology laboratory headed for the scene to inspect it. The police are trying to apprehend the culprits and the prosecution has been notified to launch an investigation.

5 Killed in Clash

NC1902220195 Paris AFP in English 2122 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Al-Minya, Egypt, Feb 19 (AFP)—Five Moslem militants and a policeman were killed Sunday [19 February] in a three-hour gunbattle in the troubled province of al-Minya in southern Egypt when police tried to storm a hideout, police said.

About 10 policemen were also wounded, several of them seriously, in the clashes in the village of (Dayf Allah) about 180 kilometres (110 miles) south of Cairo when police surrounded the village before trying to storm the house.

The militants fired back and threw Molotov cocktails at the police, killing one.

Police forces from al-Minya and the neighbouring Bani Suwayf joined the assault after being informed about the hideout.

After the shooting had stopped they recovered the bodies of five Moslem militants from the house, police added.

It was the bloodiest incident in the region, which has become a stronghold for militants particularly the outlawed al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah [Islamic Group], since the start of month.

On February 11 four militants were killed by police in the village of Maghaghah in the same region.

Earlier Sunday Islamic militants shot dead a suspected police informer near Mallawi also in the al-Minya Province in Upper Egypt.

Sunday's clashes raised the death toll to 662 since militants launched their campaign in March 1992 to topple the secular government.

Citizen Killed

NC2002092695 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2220 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 19 Feb (MENA)—An Interior Ministry security source announced this evening that citizen Muhammad 'Abd-al-Hamid Hasan was shot and killed today by unknown assailants while passing down a dirt road in Kubri Minshat Hamzawi in 'Izbat Yakan near the al-Mahras Police Station in Mallawi District in al-Minya Governorate.

The source said that the security forces are making efforts to arrest the culprits.

The Prosecutor's office has been notified.

5 'Terrorists' Killed

NC2002091795 Cairo MENA in Arabic 0804 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Feb (MENA)—An Interior Ministry security source made an announcement early this morning in which he said that al-Minya Governorate's security forces succeeded last night in eliminating five terrorists during a gunfire duel in the latter's hideout in an agricultural area in Bani Wahdan village in al-Minya's al-'Idwah District.

The exchange of gunfire resulted in the martyrdom of police conscript Zakariya al-Musaylihi Da'wish, a member of al-Minya's Central Security Forces.

The security source explained that in the context of the continuing effort to pursue and arrest fugitive terrorists and following the reception of information that some fugitives were hiding in a plantation in Bani Wahdan in al-'Idwah District, the security forces raided the hideout to apprehend the fugitives and seized their weapons.

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As they approached the place, the security forces were met with a hail of gunfire which they returned, silencing the fugitives' fire.

The exchange resulted in the killing of the following terrorists:

—'Amir Fathi Marzuq Bibawi, leader of an organization in al-'Idwah District, who was wanted by the police in connection with several violent attacks and recent assassinations in al-Minya.

—Wa'ir Thabit Wa'ir, a prominent and active terrorist suspected of involvement in several violent attacks and bombings.

—'Id al-Sa'di 'Abd-al-Ghani Haridi, accused of manufacturing explosive materials.

—Nadi Abu-al-Sa'ud Haridi, an active terrorist who participated in numerous violent attacks.

—Muhammad Ramadan Muhammad Sulayman, a terrorist who took part in several recent attacks in al-'Idwah District.

The source added that the security forces arrested Muhammad Sa'd Qutb, a newly recruited terrorist.

The dead terrorists were found to have been in possession of an automatic rifle, two pistols, a quantity of bullets and other ammunition for various weapons.

Forensic experts left for the site of the incident to examine the weapons and determine the source that had supplied them.

The Prosecutor's Office was also informed in order to start an investigation.

'Terrorist Elements' Wound 3 Villagers

NC2002181795 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1745 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Feb (MENA)—A responsible Interior Ministry source has stated that some terrorist elements trying to escape an approaching security force fired at villagers in the Naj' Muhaydi area of Tarfa village, in the Markaz Samalut District of Upper Egypt's al-Minya Governorate, wounding three of them.

The source added that the security force had come under fire while approaching the hideout of some terrorist elements wanted in connection with Case No. 4991 of 1994. The wounded were immediately taken to a hospital for treatment and the prosecutor's office has been notified to start an investigation.

Libya

Government Plans Lockerbie Law Seminar at The Hague

MM2002143295 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 12 Feb 95 p5

[Report by Allen George: "Libya Organizes Seminar for Lawyers on Lockerbie at the Hague"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Libyan Government is planning to hold a seminar at The Hague, headquarters of the International Court of Justice, at which international lawyers will discuss the holding of the trial of the Libyans accused of carrying out the Lockerbie plane explosion in Libya and not in Scotland or the United States.

This step falls within the framework of a large-scale Libyan campaign to explain the reasons for the Libyan Government's refusal to hand over the Libyans accused in the case of the Lockerbie explosion.

The seminar will be held at the Social Studies Institute at The Hague toward the end of next month under the title "The Lockerbie Case in the Light of International Law Commitments." Stephen Mitchell, a British lawyer who is defending the accused Libyans, has stated that "the idea will center on the Lockerbie case within its legal framework instead of its political framework."

The seminar will be confined to specialists in international law only and the discussions are expected to concentrate to a great extent on the 1971 Montreal Convention on the Safety of Civil Aviation, which states that those who commit crimes against aircraft should be tried in any one of the countries concerned with the crime.

Tripoli insists that the accused in the Lockerbie case, namely 'Abd-al-Basit 'Ali Muhammad al-Miqrahi and al-Amin Khalifah Fahimah, should be tried in Libya. While Washington and London argue that the Montreal Convention was not designed to apply in a case like the "Lockerbie case," since one of the signatory states to the treaty and two of its people are accused of perpetrating the crime. The two capitals point out that the Libyan judicial system does not enjoy independence from the government of President Mu'ammar al- Qadhdhafi.

Libya had brought a case against the United States and Britain in 1992 before the International Court of Justice for the application of the provisions of the Montreal Convention. The court is not expected to issue its verdict in this case until the beginning of next year at the earliest.

As to the seminar which is expected to be held next month, it will aim at acquainting people with the legal aspects of the case, according to lawyer Mitchell.

The seminar will be sponsored by the Libyan Lawyers Union and the Arab Lawyers Union, but it will be the Libyan Embassy in Brussels that will supervise the organization of the seminar, because the Libyan Embassy in Brussels is the one that represents Libya in the north European countries.

Libyan lawyer Ibrahim al-Ghuwayl, who supervises Libya's activities in the Lockerbie case, will play a fundamental role in supervising the seminar and the progress of its work.

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It is recalled that the Lockerbie explosion killed 270 people, and the United Nations imposed a series of trade and other sanctions against Libya to make President al-Qadhdhafi hand over the accused to the court.

Despite the seminar's concentration on legal matters, Libya will most likely use it as a new start for its international information campaign aimed at refuting the incriminating evidence against the accused Libyans.

One of the main ideas in the Libyan campaign is to intimate that Ahmad Jibril, leader of the PFLP [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]-General Command, who lives in Damascus, was the one who carried out the operation of blowing up the plane, on behalf of Iran, which was seeking revenge for the shooting down of an Iranian passenger plane by a missile fired from an American warship in the Gulf.

Though there are no definite proofs and the whole thing was nothing more than assumptions put forward to support the theory of the involvement of the PFLP-General Command in this case, the idea has nevertheless attracted strong support from the media. Several articles appeared lately "exposing" what they called "a new proof" pointing to Iran's involvement in the matter. But a close examination of this "proof" has shown that it could not be farther from the truth.

JANA Editor Condemns Western Propaganda on Arab Threat

LD1802113595 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 0730 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Tripoli, 18 Feb JANA—In an attempt to cover up the facts and conceal from world public opinion the efforts made by the Israeli enemy to expand its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction with which it threatens the security and stability of the Arab nation and the entire region, the western media have launched a campaign of disinformation and propaganda regarding what they claim to be a military threat from some Arab countries, including the Great Jamahiriyah.

These media are alleging that the Great Jamahiriyah is endeavoring to expand its military capabilities thus threatening the security of the Israelis.

The London-based magazine JANE'S DEFENSE WEEKLY alleged that the Israeli enemy is now restructuring its military forces to confront what it terms the distant threats which the military challenges are posing. These challenges include the long-range striking capability which, the magazine said, Libya is expanding.

JANA's international affairs editor comments on this by saying that the propaganda being conducted by western media does not come as a surprise because it is part of an organized campaign led by western colonialist circles aimed at covering up the efforts made by the Israeli enemy to expand and develop its arsenal of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons... while the Israeli enemy has refused even to accept an international inspection of its means of destruction thus violating the most basic international charters and treaties.

The international affairs editor adds: "It would have been more appropriate for those who are levelling accusations and spreading lies to at least feel ashamed in front of their peoples who are witnessing the daily terrorist practices carried out by the troops of the Israeli enemy against the Palestinian Arab citizens whose land this enemy is usurping and who are being subjected to genocide...

Would it not be more appropriate for these frenzied propaganda channels to talk about what is currently happening on the Arab land and about the threat that the enemy, which is backed by America and its allies, the western colonialist states, is posing to the survival of all the Arabs...

JANA's international affairs editor concludes his commentary by saying that the real danger for the Arab nation and the security of the entire world definitely comes from the Israeli enemy... and that the means of destruction are being stockpiled in that infernal camp which the West planted in the heart of the Arab nation without there being any deterrent to it.

The editor says that the reports these media are spreading could only be interpreted as falling in the context of a well-orchestrated plan in which the enemies of the Arab nation, namely the Jews and the Christians, have come together with a view to dominating this nation and plunder its resources and capabilities... This is also an attempt to find an excuse for world public opinion to justify the decision of the Israeli enemy not to commit itself to signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

JANA Editor Blasts France's 'Twisted Logic'

LD2002201895 Tripoli Voice of Greater Arab Homeland in Arabic 1730 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The French defense minister has been reiterating the Western claims circulating lies and misrepresentations aimed at distorting and discrediting the image of the Arab nation and serving the venomous crusader-Western plot, which is completely aligned to the Israeli enemy.

At the conference on the Mediterranean, which convened in Paris, the French defense minister claimed that some Arab and Islamic countries, including the Great Jamahiriyah, have been trying to own strategic weapons and that they have ambitions, which he claimed can threaten the security of the area.

The JANA Arab affairs editor commented on the French minister's allegations and said: Deliberately circulating such lies and misrepresentations at Western official level revealed the extent of the misleading plot that America and its Western allies had been hatching to influence world public opinion, and to project an incorrect picture

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of the Arab nation and deliberately enforcing a black-out on the Israeli enemy's arsenal of nuclear, chemical, biological, and germ-warfare weapons that not only threatened the Arab nation but also the entire world.

The JANA editor explained that the dimension of this statement had exposed the twisted logic that France had used in dealing with the issues of the region. At a time when France would have done better if it asked the Israeli enemy to sign the nuclear weapon nonproliferation treaty and enabled the international organizations concerned to inspect the destructive Israeli nuclear arsenal, we see it has been resorting to such cheap and exposed methods against the Arab nation.

The French defense minister came out with this statement, which not only revealed France's poor political vision but also revealed that France is trailing behind the terroristic American policy when he stated at the same conference that it was not Europe but America who was the one who took the initiatives in this region. Thus he places on record that France has been following the same crusader plot of the United States that is hostile to the Arab nation, and which seeks to deprive this nation even of the means of self-defense in confronting the Israeli enemy who is backed materially, militarily, and technologically by the United States and the West, and who is feverishly working for extending its hostile domination and hegemony over the Arab area and putting the entire Arab existence in mortal danger.

Al-Qadhdhafi, Lebanese President Discuss Defense Issues

LD2002230595 Tripoli Libyan Television Network in Arabic 2000 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] A telephone conversation took place between the brother leader of the revolution and Lebanese President Ilyas al-Hirawi, during which it was stressed that there is a need to apply the joint Arab Defense Treaty by the Arab states and to confront the Israeli military aggression against Lebanon.

During this communication, Lebanon's right to self-defense against the terroristic Israeli aggression was stressed in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter, which gives Lebanon the right to self-defense and to confront this aggression that occupies its territory and is trying to liquidate the Lebanese resistance that rejects occupation and is working for the liberation of Lebanon.

The brother leader of the revolution and Lebanese President Ilyas al-Hirawi pointed out that, at a time when Lebanon was exposed to blatant and repeated aggression, we find that what is called the United Nations and the Security Council had made no move toward this bloody terrorism. This council is not able to implement the 7th chapter of the UN Charter against the Israeli enemy who is carrying out these aggressive acts that make it imperative that the 7th provision be applied against these acts immediately and without the need to even holding routine consultations. This is because these acts are carried out by the so-called Israel, the spoiled foster child of America.

If America—the most powerful state in the world—refrained or refused to apply this chapter on the Israelis who then can apply it on them? The brother leader of the revolution and Lebanese President Ilyas al-Hirawi wondered if the 7th chapter cannot be applied on this aggressor, then against whom can be applied? There is no excuse anymore for the Arab governments to stand as spectators and see one of their regions being exposed to a foreign military aggression while the Joint Arab Defense Treaty has not been invoked toward this aggression.

The brother leader of the revolution and Lebanese President Ilyas al-Hirawi affirmed during the telephone link-up that racing toward the Israeli enemy had inflicted shame and dishonor on those who did so; as it has been taking place while Lebanese blood was flowing on the soil of Lebanon, and while on the other hand, the ink of surrender, submission, and capitulation to the Israeli enemy has been flowing.

During this conversation, the Lebanese president informed the brother leader of the revolution of the size of the losses and the enormous damage to which Lebanon has been exposed daily as a result of Israeli artillery shelling, and the attacks of the Israeli war planes on Lebanese towns and heavily populated quarters where buildings and homes have been demolished on top of their innocent occupants and the plantations set ablaze.

The brother leader of the revolution renewed to the Lebanese president the commitment of the Great Jamahiriyah to the Joint Arab Defense Treaty, and to its implementation and readiness to give anything that Lebanon may request in accordance with this treaty.

During this conversation Lebanese President Ilyas al-Hirawi saluted the brother leader of the international al-Fatih revolution and the brave, steadfast, and heroic Libyan Arab people, and he explained that what the brother leader of the revolution had said during this conversation deserved extending a salute and esteem to every Libyan man and woman, as they stand up most proudly to America and aggression, and as they declare their readiness to defend Lebanon against Israeli aggression.

Clinton's Remarks on Oil Imports Criticized

LD2102093795 Tripoli Libyan Television Network in Arabic 2000 GMT 20 Feb 95

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Following a study by the U.S. Department of Commerce which was published 16 February, U.S. President Clinton said in a written statement: I agree with the conclusions of the Department of Commerce that the country's increasing dependence on imported crude oil and oil by-products threatens national security because it increases America's exposure

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to the danger of the logistics sector. Clinton also agreed with the Department of Commerce recommendation that no customs duty be applied to imported oil.

Thus, the U.S. President indirectly reveals the White House strategy with regard to the oil producing states. While he links reliance on the imports of crude oil and its by-products with the question of U.S. national security, he declares his agreement with the Commerce Department's recommendation that no customs duty should be applied to imported oil. This reveals political and economic ambitions and objectives which have been part of the strategy of U.S. Administrations from the time of the oil crisis in the seventies by attempting to control the sources of oil and regarding them as part of U.S. national security at the expense of other states.

The U.S. President's statement, in addition to revealing his cunning intention to disregard the security and sovereignty of other states and not to take them into account even as individuals in the international community, hints at further blackmail of the oil producing states. While signalling what U.S. policy may be on oil imports he was trying to make the oil producing states understand the unwillingness of the United States to rely on the products of these states, so their reaction will be to engage in a race to sell crude oil products at the lowest price. [passage omitted]

It is not unusual to see the U.S. Administration resorting to such behavior because it constantly lays traps for its clients and customers who have thrown themselves on its mercy and who constantly proceed in its orbit. Despite all of this, the U.S. Administration does not give them any weight or respect but it deals with them through maneuver and blackmail, treating them constantly as mere;y of marginal importance. [passage omitted]

The false democracy of U.S. governments, even when they call themselves democrats, is clear. That is to say, all those people who have succeeded one another in ruling the United States were primarily gamblers, speculators, capitalist brokers, and nothing else.

If the United States, which is seen as the sole major power, with no rival after the collapse of the Soviet Union, says that its national security is in danger when it relies on overseas imports what is left for all the countries, including the Arab states, whose basic economies rely on what they import from outside their borders? It is another truth which the revolutionary and prudent visionary [al-Qadhdhafi] referred to when he said that there is no independence for a nation which feeds itself from outside its borders. The United States itself has affirmed the truth of this through its President Clinton. However, the United States does not want to rely on itself; it wants to spread its control over the sources of petroleum energy without paying attention to the sovereignty of the other states or their national security.

This is confirmed by the refusal of the U.S. Administration to offer any new initiatives to help the local manufacturers—the small and medium oil and natural gas producers. [passage omitted]

Sudan

*Paper Cites U.S. Report on Toppling Regime

95AA0092B London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 11 Feb 95 pp 1, 4

[Report by Amir Tahiri in New York]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Political analysts close to the new Republican majority in the U.S. Congress have affirmed that the United States is preparing a four-point plan to deal with what it describes as "fundamentalist extremism," and what it regards as the world's "enemy number one."

Newt Gingrich, the new speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, addressed a meeting in Washington at the beginning of this week, attended by senior security and armed forces' experts. He gave a comprehensive review of the proposed policy and its basic elements. The plan specifically calls for extending strong support to the Algerian Government to deal with what it called the "fundamentalist challenge" and extending greater support to Egypt. It also calls for developing an effective strategy to help new forces assume power in Iran.

The four points of the new policy are as follows:

1. Preventing the fundamentalists from assuming power in any state. This is the basic part of the new strategy. It was prepared especially to help Algeria defeat the fundamentalist challenge to the government. Egypt will also receive greater support to uproot the fundamentalist groups involved in violent attacks.

2. Emphasizing the need for the continuation of the Middle East peace process, and for the resumption of the stalled peace talks.

3. Cooperation with the principal U.S. allies, both in the Western industrial countries and in the Islamic world, to adopt a unified position regarding the fight against fundamentalism.

4. Preparing and applying a policy to overthrow the fundamentalist regimes, which currently provide assistance to movements that support violence in the Islamic world. The plan has given priority to overthrowing the regimes in Iran and Sudan.

Addressing more than 400 officials and military personnel, in the largest gathering of its kind, Gingrich said that the United States will abandon its current policy, which only reacts to the fundamentalist challenge, and it will go on the offensive. He also said: We must remove the incentive from the man who uses violence and go beyond economic sanctions and political condemnations. [passage omitted]

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Western Sahara

Moroccan Forces Retaliate After Ksabi Clashes

LD2102105895 (Clandestine) National Radio of the Saharan Democratic Arab Republic in Arabic 2000 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Fierce clashes flared up during the first week of February in the town of Ksabi, situated about 10 km from the town of Goulimine, between Saharan citizens and the forces of the Moroccan enemy. During demonstrations, our fellow citizens raised Saharan national flags in the town. They also decorated the streets with revolutionary slogans and distributed struggle pamphlets. During their confrontation with the enemy soldiers they shouted slogans in support of the just struggle of the Saharan people, under the leadership of the Popular front for the Liberation of Saquia el Hamra and Rio de Oro [Polisario].

After first panicking, the enemy soldiers responded—as they always do—with severe oppression, arrests, house searches, and indiscriminate attacks, particularly against youths. Some sources report that the fever of persecuting Saharan nationals suspected of participating in this demonstration has reached the occupied city of El Aaiun, where the enemy forces are searching for those they believe might have arrived from Ksabi.

The national radio has also learned that disturbances also occured in the towns of Asrir and Tiliouine, situated near Goulimine, and that it is possible the disturbances could spread to other places in the area.

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Reportage on GCC Oil Ministers' Talks in Riyadh

Ministers Begin Talks

LD1802215395 Riyadh Saudi Arabian Television Network in Arabic 2000 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] At the headquarters of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] secretariat in Riyadh this evening their excellencies the GCC oil ministers began work of the 20th meeting of the GCC permanent ministerial committee on oil cooperation.

The meeting was attended by His Excellency Shaykh Fahim Bin-Sultan al-Qasimi, the GCC secretary general and Dr. 'Abdullah al-Quways, the GCC assistant secretary general for economic affairs.

Chairman of the meeting Yusuf Ahmad al-Shirawi, the minister of development and industry in the State of Bahrain, made a speech at the outset of the meeting in which he expressed the hope that this meeting will be a meeting of goodness and blessing for the peoples of the region. In the name of the participants he expressed thanks and gratitude to King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, the custodian of the two holy mosques, and his wise government for the hospitality and welcome accorded to them. He also expressed his thanks and appreciation to Hisham Nazir, the minister of petroleum and mineral resources for convening this meeting in Riyadh in this holy month.

Afterward, the meeting was turned into a closed session.

Members Accused of Exceeding Oil Quotas

LD1802230495 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic 2152 GMT 18 Feb 95

[All quotation marks as received]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Riyadh, 18 Feb—The Gulf Cooperation Council states [GCC] tonight criticized states who were not named but who are OPEC members for producing beyond the quotas fixed for them within the OPEC framework.

The criticism came from Dr. 'Abdullah al-Quwayz, the GCC assistant secretary general for economic affairs, at a news conference he held at the end of one-day meeting of the six GCC oil ministers. [passage omitted]

He said that the ministers managed to arrive at a view "that there is surplus in the supply specially from states outside OPEC."

He added that OPEC states also have exceeded their quotas." He said that watch committees have been investigating this. He described the position of the world oil market at present as in favor of investing in new energy projects."

He pointed out that the meeting stressed the need to confront the phenomenon of the future market speculators and the negative effect of this phenomenon on the oil markets and "that at present there is a review concerning the supply and demand in the market."

He said that the meeting had recommended that the position of the GCC states toward the EU be reviewed in the light of the latest call for a new policy in the Middle East area and north Africa based on economic partnership.

Dr. al-Quwayz explained the need to have a unified stand in this connection "especially when we know now that the European Union had decided to deprive some GCC members of the most favored treatment for their oil, petrochemical, and aluminum products. He said that the council is studying a number of options in this connection. [passage omitted]

Ministers Conclude Meeting, Leave Riyadh

LD1802234795 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 2315 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Riyadh, 18 Feb—Their excellencies the oil ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] member states left Riyadh this evening after attending the 20th meeting of the permanent ministerial committee for petroleum cooperation. [passage omitted]

King Fahd's Bahrain-Qatar Mediation Welcomed

LD2002215095 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 1918 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Riyadh, 20 Feb SPA—Shaykh Fahim Bin-Sultan al-Qasimi, secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC], expressed his satisfaction and happiness at the announcement made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia concerning the resumption of the good mediation efforts between the two sisterly states of Bahrain and Qatar by King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, the custodian of the two holy mosques, in response to the two country's desire in this good mediation proceeding from the strong fraternal ties that bind the brothers within the framework of the single Gulf house, the single family spirit, and the interrelated ties and interests that unite them.

He said in a press statement today that "we are completely confident that these good efforts that the custodian of the two holy mosques is conducting will bear good results with God's will, and will have a favorable impact on the spheres of cooperation and coordination so as to contribute toward strengthening the march of the council's countries, enrich their gains, and maintain the security and stability of the countries of the region that will achieve their peoples' hopes and aspirations, and enable them to deal actively with the developments and dangers facing the region." [passage omitted]

Kuwait, Oman Deny Naval Exercises With Israel

NC2002214895 Paris AFP in English 2029 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Feb 20 (AFP)—Oman and Kuwait on Monday [20

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February] denied they would take part in joint Arab-Israeli naval exercises, as reported in Tel Aviv.

"This report is without any foundation and has no bearing with reality," the Omani Defence Ministry said.

Kuwait's Defence Minister Ahmad al-Hamud al-Jabir al-Sabah also said the report was "completely baseless," and an official in his ministry charged that Israel was trying to divide Arab ranks.

The Israeli Defence Ministry said Sunday that its navy would for the first time stage manoeuvres with several Arab fleets off Tunisia in March.

Ships from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Tunisia had agreed to take part with Israeli vessels during multilateral talks on arms control and regional security in the Middle East, the ministry said.

[Kuwait KUNA in Arabic at 1200 GMT on 20 February in a similar report adds that in a statement to 'AL-QABAS' published today, al-Hamud stressed that "the exercises in which Kuwait participates, whether with Gulf states or friendly states, and whether they are bilateral or multilateral, are agreed upon in advance and are announced before they are held, so that everyone, both in the states of the region and in Kuwait, knows about them".

[He said: "We are in (?continuous) contact to coordinate with the Gulf states [word indistinct] such exercises and I stress that the news reported by the agency has no truth to it at all."]

Bahrain

Saudi Mediation in Dispute With Qatar Welcomed

JN1902170195 Manama WAKH in Arabic 1420 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Manama, 19 Feb (WAKH)—His Highness Shaykh Khalifah Bin-Salman Al Khalifah, chairman of the Bahraini Council of Ministers, has expressed his appreciation for the good offices and mediation efforts extended by King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, between the State of Bahrain and the fraternal State of Qatar. [passage omitted]

His highness noted that Bahrain stresses the need to reach a cordial solution between the two fraternal countries and strongly believes that a brotherly solution is best, particularly between brothers, because it is the one that will clear the atmosphere, unify positions, end the dispute, an enable us to avoid the problems that result from border disputes. [passage omitted]

His highness added that proceeding from this logic, Bahrain welcomes a tripartite meeting including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in its capacity as a sponsor state; the fraternal State of Qatar; and the State of Bahrain in order to lay the groundwork for a brotherly solution.

Foreign Minister on Qatar Dispute, Peace Process

MM2002111595 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 16 Feb 95 pp 1, 4

[Report by Jihad al-Khazin: "Bahrain Urges Settlement of Dispute with Qatar Bilaterally or in Context of Cooperation Council Mechanism"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Manama—Bahrain yesterday again urged a return to the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] for the settlement of its dispute with Qatar. It also said that it would accept international arbitration as a last resort provided the two sides agree in advance on the terms of such arbitration.

Bahraini Foreign Minister Shaykh Muhammad Bin-Mubarak has stated that the International Court of Justice [ICJ] in the Hague only considered one viewpoint, namely Qatar's, and, therefore, Bahrain does not agree that the IJC is qualified to consider the dispute.

In an interview at his office in Bahrain yesterday, Shaykh Bin-Mubarak said that Bahrain does not wish to escalate the dispute with Qatar, does not expect any problems on the border, and wants a settlement of the dispute in a spirit of fraternity and good neighborliness because escalation neither serves the two countries nor the region and is harmful to all.

Discussing the background of the Bahraini objection, the foreign minister said that the ICJ decided on 1 July 1994 that the two sides should agree on joint plea for the settlement of their dispute and submit that to the court or submit separate pleas at the same time by mutual agreement. He added that the two sides held three meetings but could not agree on a joint plea because Qatar rejected Bahrain's claim of sovereignty over al-Zubarah. Bahrain sent a report to the court end of November stating that no agreement was reached. Qatar later submitted its case separately, but Bahrain rejected that because it was not part of the court's jurisdiction to consider a separate plea.

Bahrain's refusal to attend the court proceedings is nothing new. There are 13 precedents, the latest being the U.S. refusal to attend in connection with a case filed by Nicaragua.

The foreign minister said: "We appealed to the brothers in Qatar to go back to the Gulf fold" in accordance with what was agreed upon at the Manama summit, namely: 1. The importance of settling issues by bilateral diplomatic means until the next summit in Muscat. 2. The submission of the dispute to the Muscat summit if no agreement is reached before then. And 3. The avoidance of discussions of these issues in the media to prevent tension.

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Asked if there are any foreign elements involved in the dispute, Shaykh Muhammad said that any state interested in instability in the region would rejoice at the dispute, and any state interested in stability would be against escalation.

Shaykh Muhammad said he wishes the solution could be solved on the basis of "no harm and no ill effects," or "no victor and no vanquished," because the issue is not just the Hawar islands but a vital strategic matter affecting Bahrain's water and air routes. He said that the territory Qatar is claiming constitutes one-third of Bahrain territory and has been under Bahrain's sovereignty for 200 years.

In reply to a question about the recent demonstrations in Bahrain, the minister replied that acts of rioting did occur but the situation is now good. He added that some hands had prepared and trained long for that.

Asked if he meant Iran, he replied: "We do not wish to name particular countries or engage in media altercations. The states which want stability for us are known, and the states which have a vested interest in instability are also known. What is important is that the riots have now ended."

Asked if there were any separate incidents after the demonstrations, he denied that.

Asked if Bahrain's economy was affected by the riots, he replied that it was affected for a short period and there was a drop in the stock market, but the latter recovered and showed a major upward surge in the past two days. In reply to another question on Bahrain's relations with Israel, Shaykh Muhammad said that there is a fundamental change in the approach to the Middle East question. Bahrain, he said, is committed to the Arab resolutions and has participated in all the joint committees since the Madrid conference. He confirmed that there are no contacts with Israel outside the framework of the current Arab decision.

Shaykh Muhammad said he wishes progress will be made on the Lebanese-Syrian front because it is essential and there can be no comprehensive or lasting peace without peace on that front.

Asked if Bahrain is coming under U.S. pressure to speed up the normalization steps with Israel, he replied that the United States and Russia are making great efforts to enhance peace and urged support for the process at every meeting.

In reply to another question, he said he hopes that all GCC members will abide by the steps agreed upon to ensure that the peace process will proceed in harmony. As far as Bahrain is concerned, he said, it is committed to all the GCC resolutions and the Damascus Declaration resolutions, and wants the Middle East to be free from nuclear weapons, as it has been requesting since the seventies.

Kuwait

Foreign Minister Interviewed on Iraq-Related Issues

LD1702144295 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic 1225 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Bonn, 17 Feb—Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah, first deputy prime minister and foreign minister, said in a statement published here today that Iraqi recognition of the State of Kuwait's independence and sovereignty over its border "had not been something new." He recalled in his statement to the German paper ANZEIGER ALLGEMEINE that, despite Iraq's recognition of Kuwait and its sovereignty since 1963, and despite having had diplomatic relations with Kuwait, "Iraq suddenly abandoned its commitments" and occupied the State of Kuwait.

Answering a question on the circumstances that Kuwait might accept in order to ease the international sanctions imposed on Iraq, Shaykh Jabir al-Sabah said: "It is not in my powers to maintain or ease the sanctions."

He added: The question of sanctions is "within the powers of the UN Security Council, which has applied them. It is the Security Council that should apply pressures on Saddam Husayn so that he will fulfill the necessary conditions prior to the lifting of the embargo."

Shaykh Jabir al-Sabah stressed the need for the Baghdad regime to release Kuwaiti POW's and hostages and return Kuwaiti property that its forces had stolen from Kuwait and to get rid of the weapons of mass destruction in its possession in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions.

Shaykh al-Sabah, Kuwaiti deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, affirmed that both the Kuwaiti and the Iraqi peoples "were the victims of the Baghdad regime." He added that the Kuwaiti people had suffered under an unprecedented occupation; they were the victims of a campaign of murder, rape, and plundering.

Shaykh Jabir al-Sabah pointedly reaffirmed Kuwait's demand that Iraq must pay damages for all the losses that it caused during its unjust occupation of the country. He added that the United Nations had estimated the damages to the Kuwaiti oil sector, when the Iraqi invaders forces set fire to the oil wells, to have amounted to 70 billion dollars. He went on to say, however, that the estimate included damages for plundering.

Shaykh Jabir al-Sabah pointed out the Iraqi regime's refusal to accept the UN Security Council resolution that allowed Iraq to sell 1.6 billion dollars worth of oil and to use the money for the importation of necessary food for the Iraqi people.

Concerning Kuwait's position toward the countries that have been trying to resume economic relations with the Baghdad regime, Shaykh Jabir al-Sabah said that such endeavors will not be fruitful unless Iraq obeys all

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Security Council resolutions on the Gulf war. Shaykh al-Sabah hoped, nonetheless, that Iraqi would implement all Security Council resolutions and affirmed: "We will be very happy with such an outcome."

Iraqi Claims of Interference in Internal Affairs Denied

LD2002121495 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic 1001 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] UN, 20 February 1995—Kuwait has categorically denied the Iraqi allegations which came from Baghdad earlier this week that by receiving Iraqi opposition personalities, the State of Kuwait is interfering in Iraqi internal affairs and violating international law.

In a letter sent to UN Secretary-General Butrus-Ghali, Kuwait's permanent representative to the UN, Muhammad Abdallah Abu al-Hasan, said that "while categorically rejecting the Iraqi accusation, Kuwait wishes to stress that the Iraqi officials are trying, as usual, to shift the blame for the consequences of the popular rejection of, and complaints about, the Iraqi Government's practices and polices against the Iraqi people to others, whether they are [word indistinct] or even UN international organizations, in an attempt to divert the attention from the real reasons behind the increasing popular discontented reaction inside Iraq resulting from these practices and he said that a similar Iraqi accusation list is a good example of that."

Abu al-Hasan added "that Kuwait's policy towards its neighbors and other states was fixed, clear, and well known, and that Kuwait refrains from interfering in the internal affairs of others to the same extent as Kuwait was intent on preventing interference in Kuwait's internal affairs, and that Kuwait's respect for, and compliance with, the principles of international law and the basis of good neighborliness needed to be stressed and confirmed. [no closing quote as received]

Abu al-Hasan went on to say that "Iraqi officials are the last people who have the right to talk about respecting the principles of international law and Security Council resolutions, since the whole region is still troubled by the effects of the Iraqi regime's aggressive behavior, its occupation of the State of Kuwait, and its continuing threat to the states of the region."

Kuwait's representative added "that the visit of Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, chairman of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, to Kuwait and his meetings with senior officials which were announced in the press and the media beforehand, are part of Kuwait's endeavors to lighten the suffering of those Iraqi people who have been forced by Iraqi policy to migrate to some neighboring states."

Abu al-Hasan said "that what Kuwait did was on a purely humanitarian basis which reflected its continuous concern with giving aid within the framework of providing foodstuffs [words indistinct]. Muhammad al-Baqir was also given the opportunity to have contacts with important humanitarian organizations."

[Passage indistinct] by the Iraqi regime towards Kuwait and shows the extent to which Iraqi officials make a mockery of adherence to the principle of peaceful intentions in their dealings with Kuwait and neighboring states, thus constituting a threat to the security and peace of the region."

Abu al-Hasan stressed "that Kuwait was confident that all friendly states were aware of the truth of the Iraqi behavior and accusations, just as they also knew the extent to which Kuwait respected the principles of international law, good neighborliness, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states," and that it, Kuwait, was continuing "to respect these principles, proceeding from its legal responsibilities and its desire to achieve security and stability in the region."

Abu al-Hasan called for members of the Security Council to be informed of the contents of this message and for it to be distributed as an official document.

Two Missing Near Iraq Border Feared Kidnapped

NC2002142895 Paris AFP in English 1319 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kuwait City, Feb 20 (AFP)—A hunt has been launched for two Kuwaiti brothers missing in the northern desert near the Iraqi border amid fears they may have been kidnapped, an interior ministry official told AFP Monday [20 February].

Ahmad Fahad, 17, and his brother Muhammad, 20, went missing after giving a lift to their third brother to an army location in the al- 'Abdali area 118 kilometres (73 miles) north of Kuwait city, he added.

"We cannot decide whether the two brothers were kidnapped by Iraqis or lost their way in the desert," he said.

"Our security forces are still looking for them and the investigation is going on," he said.

An official in the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Kuwait said they had not been informed by Kuwaiti authorities about the disappearance.

Iraqi forces were routed from the tiny emirate by a US-led coalition in the January-February 1991 Gulf War.

Two Kuwaitis have since gone missing on the northern border. Both were jailed for seven years by an Iraqi court after being accused of entering Iraq illegally. The ICRC official said the organisation visits them regularly.

The interior ministry also charged that a group of Iraqis had last week crossed the border and shot to death a Bangladeshi shepherd in the al-'Abdali area.

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He added the Iraqis fled back across the border after stealing the sheep.

A 200-kilometres (120 miles) demilitarized zone along the Iraq- Kuwait border is monitored by UN observers.

Cabinet Hails Bahraini-Qatari Efforts on Border Row

LD1902182195 Kuwait Radio Kuwait in Arabic 1700 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Kuwaiti cabinet this morning held its weekly meeting, which was chaired by his highness the heir apparent and the prime minister, Shaykh Sa'd al-'Abdallah Al-Salim al-Sabah.

After the meeting, 'Abd al-'Aziz Dakhil al-Dakhil, minister of state for cabinet affairs, planning minister, and acting foreign minister, stated that Kuwait had received with the utmost satisfaction and optimism what had been announced by the fraternal states of Bahrain and Qatar regarding their joint brotherly desire to solve the border dispute between them by cordial, fraternal means within the framework of the gracious efforts exerted by the fraternal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in this respect.

Kuwait, in welcoming this blessed positive step, which exemplifies the two fraternal countries' eagerness to overcome this difference, and blessing every step that contributes to the achievement of this noble aim, stresses that solving differences between the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council should take place within the Gulf household and in the positive, responsible, fraternal spirit expressed by the brothers in Bahrain and Qatar. [passage omitted]

'Abd al-'Aziz Dakhil al-Dakhil said that on the occasion of the advent of Kuwait's 34th national day, the cabinet had reviewed a draft decree on the pardoning and reduction of prison sentences passed against some people, in accordance with the conditions and rules authorized in this respect. The cabinet approved this draft decree, which will be raised to his highness the amir. [passage omitted]

United Arab Emirates

Paper Attacks U.S. 'Contradiction,' 'Pressure' Over NPT

JN2002180895 Dubayy AL-BAYAN in Arabic 16 Feb 95 p 1

[Editorial: "The Secret Behind the Contradiction in the U.S. Position"]

[FBIS Translated Text] It is no secret that the U.S. Administration is putting pressure on every country in the world to approve the extension of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT]. Sometimes this pressure reaches the point of overt or covert threats to stop U.S. assistance to this or that country if they refuse to sign the treaty.

But, certainly, questions must be raised over U.S. credibility when this pressure is not applied to Israel at all, as if Israel is an exception that should not be questioned. The situation of Israel in particular is a blatant example of the threat to the security and peace of the whole world, and not just the security and peace of the Middle East, posed by the possession of weapons of mass destruction.

The Israeli generals announce openly daily that they will not sign the NPT and emphasize that they will continue their policy of nuclear blackmail. This in itself empties the treaty of its contents on both the regional and international levels alike.

This is also a sufficient reason for more than 20 Arab countries to refrain from signing the treaty, and this conflicts with the strong U.S. desire to get the largest number of signatures.

How can this contradiction in the U.S. position be interpreted? Can the policy of pampering Israel reach the point of inability by the U.S. Administration to recognize its real interests and to work for these interests?

Or does the reason lay in the fact that the decisionmakers in the U.S. Administration behave in accordance with an undisputed basis that Israel is a U.S. extension in the Middle East, or in other words, in the heart of the Arab world?

There are several signs that give weight to this last interpretation. The Arabs should consider their situation well before they suddenly realize that they have been caught by a huge trap.

Peaceful End to Islands Dispute Sought

MM2002111995 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 17 Feb 95 pp 1, 4

[Report by 'Abd-al-'Aziz al-Sadiqi: "Emirates Refuses To Be Dragged Into Military Confrontation With Iran"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Abu Dhabi—Well-informed sources in Abu Dhabi stressed yesterday that the United Arab Emirates [UAE] is seeking to resolve the three islands [Tunb al-Kubra, Tunb al-Sughra, and Abu Musa] issue peacefully and within the law and the rules of international legitimacy. And that it is eager not to be dragged into a military confrontation, because it is aware of the regional and international balances governing such confrontation.

The sources added that the recent Iranian escalation on the islands is the latest in a series of links aimed at changing the features of the three islands geographically, humanly, and militarily. And that this escalation—despite the threats it is posing to the region's security and stability—should prompt the international community

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to work to resolve the islands issue. Because the continuation of the occupation represents a crack in the wall of security and stability. And without finding a peaceful solution to this issue it is difficult to bring about regional or international arrangements to safeguard security.

The sources described the testimony of General Benford Bay [as transliterated], commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East, regarding Iranian military reinforcements on Tunb al-Kubra, Tunb al-Sughra, and Abu Musa as a development in the U.S. position on the islands.

The sources said that it seems that the U.S. Administration, which officially supported the idea of finding a peaceful solution to the islands issue, including referring the issue to the International Court of Justice, wants to grant this support real substance by condemning the Iranian military escalation on the three islands, which represents not only an Iranian attempt to perpetuate its occupation of the islands and impose a fait accompli there, but also a source of threat to peace in the region.

The sources added that Washington, which has a complete picture of Iranian political behavior, fears an Iranian attempt to drag the region into a form of tension with a view to concealing some of the domestic problems facing it.

On the political meaning of the U.S. general's statements, the sources said that these statements represent tacit U.S. recognition of the illegitimacy of Iran's occupation of the three islands—which in itself is important as regards UAE endeavors to secure international support for its position on the islands.

Yemen

Opposition: Leaders Fail To Heal North-South Rift

NC2002133895 Paris AFP in English 1242 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Sanaa, Feb 20 (AFP)—Seven Islamic and left-wing opposition groups accused the government on Monday [20 February] of failing to keep to an accord signed a year ago and aimed at healing rifts between the north and south.

In a statement sent to AFP, the seven including the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) which led an abortive bid to create a breakaway state in the south in the May-July 1994 civil war, said the accord "must form the basis of a national reconciliation."

The accord was signed in Amman on February 20 by President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, a northerner, and his former southern rival and ex-YSP leader 'Ali Salim al-Bid after clashes between their two forces.

The head of the Islamic al-Islah 'Abdallah al-Ahmar also signed the accord along with about 30 of the country's political leaders.

It set out planned political reforms and a decentralisation of the administration.

But Salih, leader of the General People's Congress, and al-Islah, which together now form the coalition government, denounced the accord at the beginning of the two-month war in May.

"The Amman accord was not a document to end the political crisis between the ruling parties, but an alternative for the foundation of a modern, unified and democratic state," the statement said.

"The deep political and economic crisis confronting the government is due to its renunciation of the accord," it added.

The accord was signed in a bid to defuse tension between Salih and al-Bid who had been at loggerheads for months over running the country created when the former North and South Yemens merged in May 1990.

Cabinet Welcomes King Fahd Remarks on Border Dispute

JN2002205095 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 2000 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Brother President Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih today presided over a meeting of the Council of Ministers. Vice President Major General 'Abd-Rabbuh Mansur Hadi attended.

During this meeting, the council debated various issues and developments on the national and regional scenes. The conferees examined the ground covered thus far in the ongoing negotiations between our country and the fraternal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to draw up a memorandum of understanding to resolve the Yemeni-Saudi border dispute and to promote and enhance ties between the two fraternal countries.

The conferees reiterated the eagerness of the Republic of Yemen and its unmistakable desire to resolve the border dispute between the two countries in a manner that causes no harm to any party through peaceful dialogue and fraternal understanding, ensures the legitimate rights of the two sides, and guarantees the establishment of normal fraternal ties between the two neighboring countries based on amity, fraternity, cooperation, and good neighborliness.

The conferees asserted that compliance with the letter and spirit of all the provisions enshrined in the al-Ta'if agreement and its annexes as an indivisible whole constitutes a basis that would facilitate the efforts of the two fraternal countries to embark on measures to resolve their border dispute. The conferees welcomed the statements made by King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, when he presided over a meeting held by the Saudi Council of Ministers on 13 February 1995 in which he underscored the desire of the

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Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to resolve its border dispute with our country on the basis of the al-Ta'if accord in a manner that harms no one.

The conferees said that the Republic of Yemen looks forward to seeing this affirmation reflected in the content of the memorandum of understanding being negotiated so that the ongoing negotiations between the two fraternal countries may realize the results aspired to by the fraternal peoples in the Republic of Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, particularly since this will promote their interests and prosperity, as well as regional security, stability, and peace.

Salih Awards War Disabled, Offers 'Peace'

JN1802182395 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 18 Feb 95

[Speech by President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih at a celebration to award Yemeni Armed Forces and security personnel disabled "in the battles to defend unity, democracy, and Constitutional legitimacy against the forces of rebellion, treason, agentry, and secession"; in Sanaa; date not given—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. God's peace and mercy be on Prophet Muhammad. My brothers and sons the war disabled who defended Yemeni unity and Constitutional legitimacy: I congratulate you on the holy month of Ramadan. It is a great occasion to honor the brave strugglers of the sons of our Armed Forces and security agencies, who have watered with their pure blood the tree of Yemeni unity, declared on 22 May 1990. Our thanks go to those brave fighters. When we honor those heroes, we honor all the sons of our valiant Armed Forces and security agencies and all those who sided by those brave fighters. All of you deserve to be honored. Our love and kisses for you and for all the mothers who gave birth to those fighter heroes. [applause]

I hail those brave heroes. In the name of the National Defense Council and in the name of Constitutional legitimacy, we honor our sons, who are symbols of heroism, who have fought, in defense of unity, the secessionist traitors and those who supported those traitors. Our valiant Armed Forces and security agencies are lying in wait for anyone who attempts to infringe on the unity of the homeland, its territories, and national sovereignty.

Since they were established in 1962, our Armed Forces and security agencies have fought heroic battles in defense of unity. They have defended the October and September revolutions. They are today offering their lives for no price to defend the homeland and its chaste soil. [applause] They are defending the soil, dignity, and sovereignty. They are defending honor and glory. Every Arab citizen takes pride in the Yemeni unity, which was achieved on 22 May 1990. Thank you brave fighters and thanks to your units and leaders. Thank you for your struggle, through which you have demonstrated unique heroism. These medals on your chests are an honor in the name of your people, in the name of all the sons of your people, for you, the honorable fighters. This is a medal for the war injured; this is a medal of valor. We have awarded as part of the first group a number of leaders who were martyred. Tomorrow, we will award another group of the war injured. Congratulations to you from the Yemeni people. You are brave fighters. [applause] We wish our Armed Forces and security agencies manifest victory all the time. Our Armed Forces represent a solid rock on which all plots from all directions will be destroyed.

Dear Brothers: A number of volunteers have joined your ranks. I salute those volunteers who have joined and supported our Armed Forces and security agencies. Thus, those volunteers were a support for the Armed Forces and security agencies. Our Armed Forces are deployed today on every mountain and in every plain to defend the homeland's sovereignty.

We in Yemen extend our hands in peace to those who want to have peace with our people. We will adopt dialogue with those who want to hold a dialogue with us. However, we will never accept those who seek to commit aggression against our territory, sovereignty, and national independence. [applause]

Beloved brothers and sons: Greetings to you. We have issued instructions to the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces General Command to offer all the assistance and care possible to the families of martyrs, and to the war handicapped and disabled. These amputated legs and arms, and the eyes which have been wrested from their sockets during the war are a medal decorating all the sons of our Yemeni people. Do not feel that you have lost something. You should be proud, lofty, and victorious. Congratulations to you for what you have offered to your people. We will give them all the care and attention. The Defense Ministry and the Interior Ministry should provide all the care.

On this occasion, the Defense Ministry this evening will pay 50,000 Rials to every handicapped [applause] and permanently recruit the volunteers who supported the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces Medical Services should offer gratuitous and permanent medical treatment and this should be noted in a special register in the Medical Services. Officers, NCO's, or soldiers need not buy any medicine with their salary. The Armed Forces Medical Services should open a special register and a special bureau to take care of the handicapped and to dispense medicine at the expense of the Ministry of Defense.

I greet you once again [applause], and I wish you success and many happy returns. May God's peace and blessing be upon you.

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Defector Reveals Saddam's 'Hidden Arsenal'

LD2002024395 London THE SUNDAY TIMES in English 19 Feb 95 p 15

[Article by Jonathan Calvert, Mark Skipworth, Hala Jabar, and Jon Swain under the "Insight" rubric: "The Anthrax Connection: Defector Tells of Saddam's Hidden Arsenal"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] It was Saddam Husayn's longest night. His army was on the run, his attempt to create an Arab superstate was in tatters and he feared the allies were heading for Baghdad. At a secret hideaway in a residential suburb of the capital, the Iraqi president gathered his closest aides to work out his next gambit in the Gulf war.

"Saddam looked tense and nervous. He could barely speak," recalled General Wafiq al-Samarra'i, the most senior member of the president's inner circle to defect from the regime. "He said that if the war carried on, he could not say what his fate would be. He had nowhere to hide."

The next day the allies unilaterally declare a ceasefire, and Saddam was saved. They had expelled his forces from Kuwait and could not be seen to be pursuing a vendetta against the dictator if their coalition of Arab and western forces was to hold.

The president visited Samarra'i at his headquarters an hour after hearing the news. "His mood had been transformed," said the general. "He looked relaxed and was laughing. [no end quotation mark as published] "He said that George Bush (the then American president) was forced to declare a ceasefire because of the heroism of his presidential guards. He described Bush as weak and contemptible. Saddam was living in a dream world."

The episode was a watershed for the president and for Samarra'i, who spent 20 years as an officer in the Estikhbarat, or intelligence wing of the Iraqi army, rising to head the organisation responsible for international spy networks. The insight into the delusions of a despot was the catalyst for Samarra'i's defection; from that point he sought only the opportunity to flee.

He had sickened of the way his leader had come to rely more on the prophesies of fortune tellers than the advice of his generals. At the height of the Gulf war, Saddam was guided by his personal sooth-sayer, a 12-year-old boy from the al-Obeid clan who visited him two or three times a week. Months before, he had secretly recruited a Chinese mystic through the Iraqi embassy in Peking. The man was flown to Baghdad where he predicted a glorious victory in the "mother of battles."

"Despite his retreat from Kuwait and the near-destruction of the army, Saddam was convinced that fate had intervened to keep him in power," said Samarra'i.

The general's biggest mistake was daring to be honest about Saddam's claim to victory. "I told him that I thought this was one of the biggest defeats in history. He was furious. 'How can you call this a defeat?' he said. He never trusted me again."

Two months after the gulf war ended, Samarra'i was moved to the presidential palace where he served as director-general—a demotion that enabled Saddam's spies to keep a closer eye on him.

Like many before him, the general came under suspicion of plotting against Saddam. His phones were bugged and in 1993 he was almost run over by a car, which he is convinced was an assassination attempt. He fled with his family last November to the independent Kurdish enclave of northern Iraq, helped by a small band of sympathetic army officers and escorted by peshmergas, members of the Kurdish militia. From there he made contact with the United Nations and revealed alarming details of Saddam's hidden cache of biological weapons.

Samarra'i was debriefed by the CIA, possibly at Incirlik, a Nato airbase on the Turkish border, where he detailed how Saddam had concealed ballistic missiles and biological bombs to avoid detection by UN inspectors.

Last week he confirmed to The Sunday Times that at least 80 Scuds and modified Scud al-Husseins, with a range of 400 miles, as well as 200 anthrax bombs are buried in the Salah Ad Din region of Iraq, close to Tikrit, Saddam's clan powerbase.

He said he saw documentary evidence of the existence of biological weapons only months before he defected; he has also named several presidential aides who have hidden in their homes research manuals that detail production methods for biological warheads.

His testimony on the anthrax arsenal was given further support last week by UN confirmation that Saddam is still able to develop biological weapons at al-Hakam, a desert plant 70 miles southwest of Baghdad, which has the necessary freeze-drying and centrifuges for separating the bacteria. The programme is believed to be run by Rihab Rashid Taha al-Azawi, a woman who studied for a doctorate in toxicology at the University of East Anglia. During the late 1980s she was head of Saddam's germ warfare project, but now claims to be making innocent vaccines.

"The Iraqis claim they never produced any anthrax bombs. They say their research into biological warfare was purely defensive, although they do admit to producing small quantities of anthrax," said Rod Barton, head of the bio-warfare section of the UN special commission on Iraq. His inspectors, who have never found any anthrax bombs, discovered that virtually all the documentation on the programme had been destroyed or hidden.

One of the general's most controversial revelations is that Saddam still possesses at least 10 mobile Scud launchers. He maintains the Iraqis have devised a simple

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method to avoid detection by western spy satellites; the launchers are constantly moved from one agricultural building to another.

"Samarra'i has a good reputation as a truth-teller," said a senior intelligence source. "He has confirmed a general belief that there are unused Scuds hidden away." The general has even suggested that there may be a second "supergun" capable of firing anthrax shells hundreds of miles. The cannon is said to be hidden in the Makhul mountains on the opposite bank of the Tigris river to where the first test gun was found and later destroyed.

His claims also reinforce earlier reports that Iraq sought Russian technical aid to build a new cannon.

The disclosures are severely embarrassing for the UN inspectors, who have spent four years documenting Iraq's military capability and recently praised Saddam for co-operating with the disposal of his weapons of mass destruction. "Our commission is convinced it's all over," a senior UN official said last October. "We have faith in the work we have done."

The weekend, Rolf Ekeus, head of the UN special commission, will meet Iraqi officials in Baghdad to discuss latest progress on disarmament and will shortly present a report to the UN security council. His findings are crucial: if all Saddam's weapons can be accounted for and arms production has been properly monitored, the UN will review the imposition of economic sanctions against Iraq. Russian and France are among the countries pressing for the sanctions to be relaxed.

Samarra'i offers the UN some small comfort. He is convinced that fears of Iraq developing a nuclear capability are unfounded. He points to a meeting in 1988 when Hussein Kamil, Saddam's son-in-law, discussed the nuclear programme and announced that Iraq was close to producing a nuclear bomb.

"Had the Gulf war not taken place, Iraq would have had such a bomb by the end of 1991. Saddam has the technology to create one, but does not possess the materials. There is no hidden bomb. At least we can be grateful for this."

From his secret base in the Kurdish enclave, during more than 10 hours of satellite telephone calls, Samarra'i spoke of his life at Saddam's side and how the ruling circle has dwindled as the president's paranoia has increased.

On one occasion during the Gulf war, Saddam ordered five senior army officers to appear before him and personally shot them after they had questioned his decision to stay in Kuwait.

Today his inner circle numbers about 25, either close family or friends from his home town of Tikrit. Only his favourite son, Qusai, responsible for his father's personal security, and Kamil, in charge of the family's finances, are completely trusted. They alone are permitted to carry pistols into Saddam's private office. His eldest son, 'Udayy, a murderous playboy who killed one of his father's favourite servants, is denied such privileges even though he has emerged from a family-imposed purdah.

After 10 assassination attempts, according to Samarra'i, Saddam is increasingly careful of his friends and sadistically cruel to his enemies.

One of his favourite tortures, he says, is dismemberment in which a part of the body, usually the shoulder blade, is slashed with a chainsaw before the subject is interrogated. The general said that Salem Bassou, an Iraqi air force pilot, was killed in such a fashion and his limbs returned to his family in a bag.

One of Saddam's first strategies during the Gulf war amply proved his medieval frame of mind and astonished his military advisers. To achieve his ultimate goal—the capture of the Saudi Arabian oilfields—he ordered the generals to capture as many as 5,000 British and American soldiers. The ploy was a bizarre parallel of the "human shield" tactic he had devised for western hostages in Baghdad.

"Saddam said that once thousands of allied soldiers are taken prisoner, they could be tied to the front of Iraqi tanks and transported to the Saudi oilfields. He genuinely believed that the allies would be too afraid to bomb the tanks," said Samarra'i.

"He thought he could strike a deal with the allies, handing back the hostages in return for his new conquests. We looked at him in disbelief. It just showed his naivety in military planning."

The raid by Saddam's soldiers on Khafji, a once prosperous Saudi Arabian resort close to the Kuwaiti border, was, according to the general, a foray to capture allied troops. The attack, the first and only attempt to execute Saddam's order, was repulsed with scores of Iraqis dead.

After the invasion of Kuwait, Samarra'i was directly involved in another of the president's clandestine schemes: the spread of global terrorism in retaliation for Britain and America sending troops to the Gulf.

Saddam formed a secret committee to identify terrorist targets, including multinational companies, water treatment plants and airlines. A special unit of the Iraqi army, the 888 Battalion, was instructed to carry out assassinations in Saudi Arabia.

Samarra'i, as head of military intelligence, played a key role on the committee and helped draw up a death list that included the Saudi royal family, General Norman Schwarzkopf, the commander of the allied forces, and Lieutenant-General Sir Peter de la Billiere, head of the British forces. Abu Abbas, the terrorist behind the hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise liner, was recruited to carry out attacks on British and American interests. "The plans came to nothing because of the speed and ferocity of the allied campaign took us completely by surprise," said Samarra'i.

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During the allied bombings of Baghdad, Saddam rarely stayed at any of his five presidential bunkers. His command centres were to be found in small houses in residential areas. "He would move from house to house in disguise—sometimes he would drive to them alone, dressed in traditional Arab clothes, and sometimes he would have a chauffeur," said the general. "I visited him in some of these properties. He reckoned the allies would never deliberately attack civilian districts. He was using his own people as a human shield."

Although Saddam refused to concede defeat, Kamil admitted the regime had made a tactical error by pausing after the invasion of Kuwait, thereby allowing time for Britain and America to come to the aid of Saudi Arabia. Samarra'i recalled: "Kamil described it as a 'mistake we do not wish to remember'. That was all that was ever said on the matter."

For all his boasting about the weak and contemptible West, Saddam took one threat seriously during the Gulf war. The greatest fear among the allies was that Saddam would use his armoury of poisonous gases and anthrax bombs once his forces were routed in the Gulf war.

The president, according to Samarra'i, well understood the warning by the allies that he faced "severe punishment" if he escalated the conflict. "He took this to mean that the allies would nuke him. He was even worried that he might be charged with war crimes and hunted down by their special forces."

The anthrax bombs were regarded, just as they are today, as a weapon of last resort, to be used only if Saddam's regime collapsed around him.

Foreign Minister Views NPT, Blockade, Regional Issues

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[Interview with Foreign Minister Muhammad Sa'id al-Sahhaf by Mahmud Ma'ruf in Rabat; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Ma'ruf] Your visit to Turkey has aroused great interest. What was the aim of it?

[Al-Sahhaf] I visited Ankara at the invitation of my colleague the Turkish foreign minister. The visit falls within the framework of the contacts between Iraq and Turkey. The contacts between the two neighboring countries have never stopped during the past period and we had agreed to raise them to ministerial level.

During my visit to Turkey I met with Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and delivered to him a message from Iraqi President Saddam Husayn. I also met with the Turkish Prime Minister and discussed a number of issues with her.

[Ma'ruf] Did the main interest in the talks center on the cleaning of the Iraqi-Turkish oil pipeline?

[Al-Sahhaf] This subject was discussed during the bilateral talks, because the oil pipeline is an Iraqi-Turkish economic utility that has been suffering because of the blockade imposed on Iraq. Turkey has suffered great harm which was entirely or mostly due to the unjust blockade.

Iraq is moving toward having the UN Security Council fulfill its commitments toward Iraq, foremost of which is the implementation of Paragraph 22 of Resolution 687 now that Iraq has fulfilled its commitments in respect of Section C of the aforementioned resolution which pertains to the so-called mass destruction weapons. So the question of the cleaning of the pipeline becomes a secondary matter and a mere detail compared to the implementation of the resolution.

We have previously conveyed to our Turkish friends our views on the way to clean and operate the pipeline. Our views were based on the UN Charter and possessed all the legal grounds and legitimacy. They provide for the invocation by our Turkish neighbors of their legitimate right under the provisions of Article 50 of the UN Charter to end the harm they have been suffering as a result of the unjust blockade imposed on Iraq. So they would approach the UN Security Council to secure its agreement. The council would find it difficult to reject Turkey's clear and legitimate right. Consequently Turkey will not only be able to clean the pipeline, but will also receive its oil needs in settlement of the debts owed to it by Iraq, which has to settle these debts. We clearly told them that their position was no different from Jordan's in this matter.

[Ma'ruf] What did they say?

[Al-Sahhaf] This was one of the views we expressed to our Turkish friends some time ago. There was another view, on which we worked together. It is a formula connected with the UN Security Council. We have conveyed to them our final views on it so that they may study them.

[Ma'ruf] Is there anything new in the Iraqi position concerning the UN Security Council's role in the pipeline cleaning operation?

[Al-Sahhaf] There is nothing new in the Iraqi position. Anything new has to be in the Turkish position. We have pointed them in the right direction. The more they adhere to that direction the more it will proceed on the road to implementation.

[Ma'ruf] You have repeatedly described the Turks as friends, despite the fact that Turkey was the base for the American aircraft during the 1991 aggression against Iraq. Furthermore, it is still the base for the American aircraft used in enforcing the exclusion zone in northern Iraq.

[Al-Sahhaf] Crises do not change the facts about real relations. Policies are not drawn on the basis of transitional crisis. Only the short-sighted do that. Iraq possesses experience and knowledge and respects its neighbors inasmuch as those neighbors respect Iraq's

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sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. Whatever might have happened in the past because of Turkish governments and administrations cannot mar the true friendship and strong relations that exist between Iraq and Turkey and the mutual respect they have for each other's conditions. Turkey might have other commitments due to circumstantial conditions, but whatever these may be, they do not overshadow our mutual determination to preserve the best relations between us.

[Ma'ruf] Does Turkey have a role in the Kurdish issue?

[Al-Sahhaf] The question of the Iraqi Kurds is a purely Iraqi matter. I have explained this to our friends in Ankara, and it was decided clearly and with a common understanding that this matter is an Iraqi internal matter and that under no circumstances whatsoever would any foreign party be permitted to interfere in Iraq's internal affairs.

As to the internecine fighting amongst the Kurdish rebels, it provides a clear and true example of the results of the American game. For they told the Kurds that they would be in paradise and heaven if they were to rebel against their country and their people. They placed them under an illusion and these are its results. The American plot has been collapsing and will actually continue to collapse. The Turkish side understands this matter.

[Ma'ruf] How do you envisage the return of the central authority to Northern Iraq?

[Al-Sahhaf] We have no doubt whatsoever that Iraq is a single whole and will remain so. All the plots which aim at stabbing its unity will fail. As to how this will be—that is a matter that is left to developments. We care about our country's unity and we care for the sons of our Kurdish people. The destruction our dear Northern Iraq is witnessing is bound to end because it is transient. Our Kurdish people will return within the framework they have chosen and adhere to, namely autonomy.

Our people are aware where the plot and the game lie. As far as the Iraqi Government is concerned, it is not difficult to resolve the Kurdish problem. Iraq extends its hands to all those who adhere to Iraq's unity and the national character of Iraqi political action, and this is what is actually happening.

[Ma'ruf] Iraq's relations with Iran are not stable and are wrapped in a great deal of ambiguity.

[Al-Sahhaf] We and Iran have succeeded jointly in embarking on a bilateral political operation. I have met with Iranian Foreign Minister Dr Akbar Velayati three times and we had long discussions aimed at agreeing on a method for a political dialogue to normalize relations between the two countries. I invited Dr. Velayati to visit Baghdad and he accepted my invitation. But for reasons that we neither know nor were told about, he postponed his visit to Baghdad five times. Perhaps he suffers from some domestic difficulties. But the acceptance is there and we are awaiting Velayati's visit to Baghdad so that we may begin the programmed political dialogue.

We are keen on normalizing our relations with Iran, and this is part of our foreign policy, particularly after we have felt that the Iranian side too has such a desire.

[Ma'ruf] It is said that the presence of the Iraqi opposition in Iran and the Iranian opposition in Iraq is one of the factors impeding the normalization process. Is this true?

[Al-Sahhaf] The main concern in the normalization is that it takes place between two governments. Once the normalization progresses and relations become normal, all issues would be discussed and understanding reached about them. The Iranian opposition does not exist in Baghdad alone, but throughout the world. We have neither violated nor carried out aggression against Iran's sovereignty. But the Iranians on their part have embarked on an action which they themselves know to be desperate, as though they are trying to delude other parties, hoping that they would show some indulgence toward Iran.

I do not consider that there is an Iraqi opposition in Iran. There is a bunch of trivial people, criminals and agents of the Iranian intelligence who took refuge in Iran as part of the plan against Iraq. Iran's sheltering of these outcasts will not bring them closer to those whom they are trying to get closer to. As I have said, they have embarked on a desperate action. But persistence with it will complicate the process of the normalization of relations. I Have told Velayati and other Iranian officials on several past occasions that we must not talk about this subject at present, because as two states, we have inherited an eight-year armed conflict. This is our basic topic. The other topics will only be mere pretexts used as a cover for the difficulties Velayati is facing.

[Ma'ruf] Do these difficulties stem from some Iranian forces, which have not yet forgotten the war [with Iraq], or from other forces which want to serve the American plan?

[Al-Sahhaf] I have no knowledge of the reasons that prevent Velayati from visiting Baghdad. There is talk in the media, but this cannot be taken as a basis for the establishment of relations between two countries. But we have not received any explanation for the postponement of the visit through official channels.

[Ma'ruf] On the subject of neighbors, there is Syria, though in a different situation. It was reported a few weeks ago that there is a Syrian call for an Arab summit conference to be held in Damascus and that an invitation will be sent to Iraq as a step toward the normalization of relations. Is this true?

[Al-Sahhaf] Frankly, there is no such thing. We have read about this in the media but that is all. There is nothing more. When we compare these reports with the facts, we reach one conclusion, namely, that whenever the Syrian

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side becomes involved in a crisis or in need of something from this Arab side or that, it resorts to playing the Iraqi card in a manner that has become almost familiar, in order to draw the attention of those parties to what it wants from them such as to obtain some money from some of the Gulf countries.

There is no foundation to what was reported in the media and there are no Syrian-Iraqi contacts. The only contact we have with Syria is through the tripartite Syrian-Turkish-Iraqi coordination on the level of engineers over the Euphrates River water. On the bilateral level, the only contacts that take place are those between the ministries of the interior in both countries.

[Ma'ruf] Ministries of the interior?

[Al-Sahhaf] Not at the ministerial level, but at the level of minor officials to resolve humanitarian border issues.

[Ma'ruf] By the way, the Council of Arab Interior Ministers is the only Arab council that meets regularly and whose resolutions are carried out. Why is that?

[Al-Sahhaf] I have not attended any meeting of the Arab interior ministers.

[Ma'ruf] The playing of the Iraqi card really means that Syria is in need of Iraq. You too are in need of Syria: they to bolster the cards in the settlement negotiations and you to secure the lifting of the blockade on Iraq.

[Al-Sahhaf] We do not use relations with Arabs as a means to overcome crises. Iraq does not look upon inter-Arab relations on a tactical basis, but as a sincere and serious Arab nationalist system. We believe that the best of relations should exist and in a manner agreed upon by all and serving all. It must also be a serious system, that is, not one of exchanges of courtesies but one that opens the door for greater Arab cooperation, joint projects, and the concentration and facilitation of movement of Arab manpower.

This is our common destiny, and this is the right course. In this regard, we have no reservations whatsoever regarding the establishment of strong relations with Syria, Kuwait, Egypt, Yemen, or any other Arab country. Because much of what are called crises are due to the fact that the joint Arab action takes a formal character, only without any roots and without extending to the interests of the Arab peoples. Thus it becomes a superficial formal action that is of no real value.

When this [the joint Arab action] becomes the main objective, there would be no predetermined visualization and no preconditions, and we would respond to all invitations for cooperation. We always take the initiative in this regard. We proposed to Syria a long time ago that we normalize our relations, despite the fact that making such a proposal was disturbing to us, because it goes without saying that relations between brothers should be at least normal.

[Ma'ruf] Iraq did not attend the Alexandria summit conference. Have you been officially told of its results?

[Al-Sahhaf] We were not told at all. Furthermore, the use of the Iraqi card in an abnormal manner took place at the Alexandria summit conference. It was stated that the one who made statements about Iraq's return to the Arab fold and about Arab reconciliation was a member of the Syrian delegation, but he was not named. We do not resort to such tactics. We call for normal relations based on pan-Arabism and the serving of common Arab interests, because this is what would create a strong ground for coordination and cooperation among the Arab governments.

We have not commented on the Alexandria summit conference. But let me ask what has resulted from that summit conference? I leave it to you to answer this question.

As to the use of Iraq's name, that was a cause of surprise to us. Furthermore, the part pertaining to Iraq in the summit conference's statement contained great injustice to Iraq. This is sufficient for us to understand things.

[Ma'ruf] Your relations with Oman and Qatar developed at the Gulf Cooperation Council meeting, but they remained frozen with Bahrain and the UAE. Why is that?

[Al-Sahhaf] Our relations with Bahrain and the UAE do not involve many negative aspects, and they are improving quickly. The statements of UAE Defense Minister Shaykh Muhammad on Iraq have met with great appreciation and welcome from our people and our government. We are trying to ensure that our relations with our brothers were continuous. These relations will improve and become closer in the future. We have an embassy in Bahrain and our relations with the UAE are not severed, though the embassies of both our countries are still closed. Things will soon return to their normal condition.

[Ma'ruf] If we were to use figures, we can say that Iraq's relations with the majority of the Arab countries are good. But there is a minority that prevents the convocation of an Arab summit conference because of the attitude they take toward Iraq.

[Al-Sahhaf] I wish to draw your attention to the fact that the failure to hold a comprehensive Arab summit conference was not because of Iraq. There are premeditated attempts to blame Iraq for the problems of the others. The reason that the Arab summit conference is not being held is because of the impasse this minority finds itself in. We believe that the aggression against Iraq and the sinister attempts to isolate it have led to the crises suffered by the others, who had imagined that they would be in a comfortable and excellent situation if Iraq was destroyed. It was their short- sightedness that led them into an impasse from which they can find no way out. Their sense of guilt prevents them from taking normal steps that would benefit all the Arabs. These few

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are the ones that are trying to make the others believe that it is difficult to hold a comprehensive Arab summit conference because of Iraq. These people unfortunately have certain aims which really harm them before they harm the others. Stubbornness makes one lose his reason.

I affirm that the question of Iraq was not the reason for not holding the Arab summit conference, as there is a deep feeling of regret among those who had supported striking at Iraq, because striking at Iraq has weakened all, and allowed them to be taken on one by one. This indicates a fault they are anxious to cover up. We always call for no Arab to be allowed to suffer isolation. This is because the future is the basis. When the souls calm down and all Arabs adhere to the future, there will be no difficulty in the path of holding a summit and restoring cohesion to the ranks. We encourage this because it is not in the interest of the Saudi, the Iraqi, the Kuwaiti, the Moroccan, or the Sudanese that any Arab country become weak and isolated. This is only in the interest of the aggravated few who are in an impasse because of the rancor that fills their hearts.

[Ma'ruf] You have met your Egyptian colleague 'Amr Musa more than once. Yet matters are still lukewarm between Baghdad and Cairo. Could you tell me also what is your position and views on Egypt's position toward the signing of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons? What is the state of your relations with Egypt now?

[Al-Sahhaf] We preferred to say that cooperation should be restored among the Arabs, because it is not right for some international parties to continue to look upon the Arab homeland as submissive and surrendering while the Zionist entity has a free hand to do anything it wants. Nuclear blackmail threatens the Arab homeland and this region as a whole. Hence it is not right to keep quiet about the Zionist entity's strategy of nuclear blackmail against the Arabs. The initiative [to tackle the question of nuclear blackmail] was originally an Iraqi one and was made at the Paris conference in 1989.

It was Iraq that took the lead in this matter. We clearly believe and we have irrefutable proofs and reasons to support this, that this is the right course for Iraq to follow.

This is not because they [not further specified] do not want peace. On the contrary, they want to get rid of nuclear weapons and they believe that the idea of the use of nuclear blackmail to prevent the Arabs from having a political will cannot be acceptable, because this will only harm Arab interests. Today, Europe has a relatively weak strategy. They will keep quiet for a while, but this will not bring stability to the region. This is an attitude which we constantly call for and has nothing to do with bilateral Egyptian-Iraqi relations. [paragraph as published]

This is an Arab position that was manifested in the resolutions of the Arab League. So it is a position that falls within the framework of the Arab group of countries. Why then do some of them now abandon this position? This is the result of the impasse we find ourselves in now and the state of weakness we are in. Anyway, we do not wish any Arab to suffer from a state of weakness. There should be solidarity so that it would be possible to curb this Zionist nuclear danger.

As to bilateral relations, we too have been and continue to be the ones that take the initiatives to ensure that our brothers in Egypt share our desire for Arab efforts to concentrate anew on the normalization of these relations. My meetings with Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa are always held on the margin of the meetings and conferences we attend. We exchange views and try to find ways to crystallize the steps for normalization.

[Ma'ruf] There is some talk about you going on an official visit to Cairo.

[Al-Sahhaf] There is no official visit. All my visits to Cairo fall within the framework of my participation in the meetings of the Arab League. If I were to receive an official invitation to visit Egypt, I would happily accept. On my part, I would welcome a visit by Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa to Baghdad.

[Ma'ruf] Let us now move out of the sphere of Iraq's Arab and bilateral relations. But before I begin my dialogue with you about the question of the blockade and international relations, I wish to talk about what is taking place now in the Arab world. I want to talk now about the Arab-Israeli peace and the issues stemming from it and those connected with it. Iraq has a historical stance toward a settlement. How do you view the current settlements and Arab—Israeli relations?

[Al-Sahhaf] Permit me not to comment on these matters.

[Ma'ruf] There was a great deal of talk, which was denied, about Israeli-Iraqi contacts. What lies behind the raising of this question?

[Al-Sahhaf] I affirm to you once more that all these reports are completely false and baseless. There will never be anything of this sort at all even if the world were to turn upside down. This is not true and is baseless. As to why it is being raised, I leave that to you to analyze. Some sinister parties want to confuse the issue and to distort Iraq's image. This is their basic objective. We deny this calmly and clearly.

[Ma'ruf] Are you happy with the development of relations with France?

[Al-Sahhaf] Our relations with France have been developing well. They are very diverse relations. French interests have suffered much as a result of the unjust blockade imposed on Iraq. When Iran accepted the UN Security Council resolutions and particularly the basic Resolution 687, it did so on the basis of a political decision and the basis of a legal interpretation of this resolution and not on the basis of the distorted political interpretations they now want to impose on Iraq to achieve some sinister political objectives. When we

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accepted this resolution—and the majority of the UN Security Council members support this legal interpretation of the Security Council resolutions—we implemented more than 99 percent of it. Thus France had a sound argument for restoring its relations with Iraq. Because Iraq was not disobedient, France has no difficulty in restoring relations with Iraq and looking after its legitimate interests in Iraq, which are immense. On our part, we are working in an objective manner to protect our interests. The same thing applies in our dealings with China, with Russia, and with all the countries inside and outside the Security Council.

[Ma'ruf] Are you contemplating raising your relations with France from the level of caring for interests to that of diplomacy and embassies?

[Al-Sahhaf] We are seeking this, and not only with France. We hope in the near future to do so with Italy and Britain, which makes three European countries. We hope also to do the same thing with Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

[Ma'ruf] How do you see the Russian dynamism in regard to breaking the blockade on Iraq?

[Al-Sahhaf] In its statements and in its actions, the Russian side is bound to work jointly in the objective steps agreed upon under the blockade imposed on Iraq, also for the same reasons that I have told you, because the Russian side feels that Iraq has abided by and implemented 99 percent of the UN resolutions [sentence as published]. What Ekeus has been talking about is just secondary matters. But why does not the Russian side too get active particularly as it has interests worth billions in Iraq, besides being, like France, a permanent member of the UN Security Council. A permanent member does not look after its own interests alone, which is a legitimate thing, [but should look after the interests of others] for this is an international responsibility. Iraq is a UN member country against whom certain resolutions had been taken and it has implemented them; then it is the responsibility of the permanent member to say: Yes, that country has implemented the resolutions, why do you not then lift the blockade imposed on it?

For this reason, Russia is now raising a very important issue: No blockade should be imposed on a country and on a people without there being a prior and entirely clear agreement on how that blockade will be lifted, so that no other UN member country can exploit the lack of clarity for political ends, such as is happening now in the case of the United States, which is exploiting the state of blockade that was imposed on Iraq in such an ambiguous manner.

When the UN Security Council adopted its resolution to impose the blockade, the council members did not agree on how the blockade would be lifted. The United States is now exploiting this ambiguity to serve its sinister policy in the region and to perpetuate the blockade on Iraq.

Russia believes, and there are others who share its views, that the UN Security Council should not order a blockade or impose sanctions on any UN member country before the council clearly agrees on the way and pace by which the blockade would be lifted.

[Ma'ruf] Some years ago, you expressed a desire to have a dialogue with the U.S. Administration. Were there any bilateral contacts?

[Al-Sahhaf] When we declared our wish, U.S. President George Bush was still in the White House. We said we would like to have an unconditional dialogue. Our position now is still the same. But there is nothing new and there have been no contacts.

[Ma'ruf] U.S. President Bill Clinton said last week that Iraq continues to pose a threat to American interests.

[Al-Sahhaf] The United States' insistence on the continuation of the blockade by force and outside the framework of the UN Security Council resolutions has one real motive which the Americans do not speak of and camouflage by flimsy allegations. The true reason, which is not declared, is that the United States does not want the lifting of the embargo on Iraqi oil because Iraq's quota of world oil production has been taken over since 1990 by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Washington wants this state of affairs to continue so that the rulers of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia can settle their bills under the arms contracts with the United States, which amount to tens of billions.

The game centers on the sucking in of Arab money to serve American industries. How else can we understand the meaning of the piling up of arms that stay in arsenals without being used?

[Ma'ruf] Does the Saudi attitude stem from the same basis too?

[Al-Sahhaf] That is the American position. But as to the explanation why the Saudis and Kuwaitis submit to that position, I shall leave it for you figure out.

[Ma'ruf] What if the United States insisted on maintaining the blockade on Iraq?

[Al-Sahhaf] Then it will clash with the Security Council and then the blockade will collapse.

[Ma'ruf] Do you think there are individual efforts being made to lift the blockade?

[Al-Sahhaf] Certainly. All the world countries will gradually move in that direction if the United States persists with the crime of imposing the blockade on Iraq.

[Ma'ruf] Let us now move to the question of Kuwaiti prisoners of war. Are there really prisoners of war?

[Al-Sahhaf] There are no Kuwaiti prisoners of war in Iraq.

[Ma'ruf] This matter raises an argument for the continued imposition of the blockade.

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[Al-Sahhaf] No. This has nothing to do with the imposition of the blockade on Iraq. This cheap Kuwaiti lie is being exposed day after day, firstly because there are no hostages or detainees, as the Kuwaiti rulers call them, at all in Iraq. We have returned all the prisoners of war that were in Iraq to their countries. The majority of them were Kuwaitis and they were returned to their country. Some of them belonged to the [Kuwaiti ruling] Al-Sabah family.

There are no longer any detainees or prisoners of war at all in Iraq. There remains the issue of the missing persons. This happens in all wars. There are tens of thousands of Iraqi missing persons and we shall submit a list of their names and ask to find what happened to them.

By the Kuwaitis' admission, there are 608 missing persons. Their representative, Salim al-Sabah, signed papers in Geneva stating that this issue was one of missing persons. But outside the meetings of the Technical Committee [on missing persons] which meets in Geneva, they cry and attempt to mobilize those whom they can deceive into believing that there were prisoners of war and detainees, because they are still politically blind and are tools in the hands of the Americans for harming Iraq.

This is certainly not short-sightedness but political blindness. The issue is a humanitarian one and pertains to missing persons. From the very first moment, we have cooperated with the International Red Cross Committee as well as with the Kuwaitis and others who attend the meetings, namely, the Americans and the British and the French. We are still continuing to cooperate. But the question of the missing persons has nothing to do with the blockade.

This is the first point. The second point is that this issue takes time. To this day, the Americans are still looking for their missing persons in Vietnam. Some countries still believe that their missing persons from World War II might possibly be still alive.

The issue of the missing persons is one of the tricks used by the Kuwaiti rulers to delude whoever they can into believing that the blockade is connected with this issue.

The issue of the blockade on Iraq is only connected with the destruction of the mass destruction weapons banned by UN Security Council Resolution 686. The question of weapons demands cooperation and we have been cooperating in regard to it.

[Ma'ruf] When the Kuwaitis make some moves in a number of world capitals, what do these capitals say to them?

[Al-Sahhaf] I do not know, in fact, what these capitals say to them precisely, for we do not ask.

[Ma'ruf] The U.S. Administration too talks about the question of the prisoners of war when it discusses the question of the blockade and the UN resolutions on human rights.

[Al-Sahhaf] What resolutions? There are no resolutions. There is not one single resolution that ties the continuation of the blockade to any issue other than that of the mass destruction weapons. Furthermore there is not one single UN resolution that provides for the setting up of exclusion zones, neither in southern Iraq nor in northern Iraq. Yet this "imposition" is being imposed and even France takes part in it.

[Ma'ruf] Who in practice carries it out? Is it the Americans and the British?

[Al-Sahhaf] They play the role of the gangster in the world, relying only on the policy of force. The use of force and its exercise in a foolhardy way has been the character of the period from 1989 until now. This stage will end and these stupid policies will record one of the black stains by the governments of these countries. Any attempt to gloss over this matter would be tantamount to an appeasement of this outlaw in the world.

[Ma'ruf] The UN Security Council will discuss in March whether to lift the blockade or extend it. Do you entertain any new hopes in this regard?

[Al-Sahhaf] No, but let us distinguish. Every 60 days, a revision takes the place of paragraph 31, which is an elastic paragraph. Every 60 days, the Security Council meets to see if there are any grounds for altering the regime of the boycott of Iraq, in the light of the behavior of the Iraqi Government. This is one of the matters that the international community looks upon with disgust because of these resolutions. This is one of the most abnormal periods in the history of mankind. But this period is falling apart.

The matter pertaining to this paragraph has become a mere routine. But as its discussions pertain to Iraq, Iraq makes a point of sending a delegation to New York led by Tariq 'Aziz. Since the discussions pertain to Iraq, we do not talk to them about revision, but concentrate in our meetings on talking about the action that should be taken for the implementation of paragraph 22, because Ekeus too submits a report on this subject. So our work for the forthcoming meeting is a continuation of our previous work on paragraph 22 and not on the revision.

We work jointly with members of the UN Security Council who have nothing to do with the anti-Iraq policy sponsored by the United States and who are anxious to safeguard the reputation of the UN Security Council and anxious to see the UN Charter and international law regain much of the prestige they have lost as a result of the U.S. attitude. As to whether the revision will or will not result in anything, that is not the issue.

[Ma'ruf] Do you think Ekeus' report will be positive?

[Al-Sahhaf] It must be. We work jointly with him and with the others. He will be visiting Baghdad soon within the same framework.

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British Business Delegation Arrives in Baghdad

JN1802101695 Baghdad INA in English 0905 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Baghdad, Feb 18, INA—A British delegation comprising 27 companies in the field of water treatment, drug, industry, foodstuff trade, agriculture and irrigation arrived here last night .

This visit has been organized by the London-based Iraqi-British interests group IBI with an eye to enhance economic and trade links between Iraq and Britain, especially the latter is suffering fierce competition by other Russian and European firms seeking to have access to Iraqi market, one of the most significant Mideastern markets.

Edmund Sikes, group's coordinator, has arrived in Baghdad few days earlier to schedule delegation's members meetings with Iraqi ministries and institutions concerned.

The B.B.C. noted that the British Government has given consent to these companies' having trade packages with Iraq affirming that Britain is currently is racing with other world firms to gain an economic foothold in Iraq.

It is noteworthy that this is the third visit for Iraq by British businessmen .

Delegation Members Comment on Visit

JN1902170695 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0805 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 19 Feb (INA)—Edmund Sykes, head of the visiting British business delegation, has stated that the blockade imposed on Iraq has greatly harmed most British companies, especially those that used to deal with Iraq.

In a statement to the newspaper AL-THAWRAH published today, Sykes said that the 27-member delegation he heads, which represents various companies, will work toward extending everything possible to Iraq and restoring ties between the two countries to what they were before the blockade. He said: Judging by the talks we held with the Iraqi official, we feel that Iraq is fully prepared to restore ties and sign agreements with British companies.

Sykes said: We will study all that we learned during the visit and will inform all the British companies of Iraqi needs in terms of commodities and materials. Sykes added: The group I am heading on this visit will also submit a report to the British government on this visit and will provide more details if it is asked to.

In a similar statement, another member of the delegation said: The sanctions imposed on Iraq have had negative effect on the people's lives, especially children because of the sharp shortage in food and medicine.

He said: I believe that this blockade is a grave international mistake committed against this country and its good people. He added: We hope that the suffering of the Iraqi people will stop soon and that the British companies will return to their work in Iraq.

Team Exploring Humanitarian Aid Offer

JN2002110695 Baghdad INA in English 0950 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Baghdad, Feb 20, INA—A group of British industrialists are currently in Baghdad to discuss with Iraqis what sort of humanitarian aid they can offer to Iraq which suffers from a stringent trade curbs since 1991.

The visit which is the first of its kind by British businessmen since the US-led war on Iraq in 1991 also aims at exploring ways to resume trade with Iraq after the end of the sanctions.

The visit is organised by the London-based Iraqi-British Interests Group (IBI).

Spokesman of the group Edmund Sykes told the BAGHDAD OBSERVER: We are here to investigate the situation in Iraq to see what we could do in the short term to provide humanitarian aid which is obviously necessary. There is a great shortage of food and medicines.

"We are also to build the historical ties between the Iraqi people and the British people which go very deep in the hope that when the sanctions are lifted, we continue to do trade with Iraq as we did before', Sykes said.

The British businessman said that his government is aware of their visit but they are allowed only to talk humanitarian needs and past business that was interupted by the gulf conflict... "We are not able to discuss future projects", Sykes stressed.

Sykes said that some members of IBI are already being involved in sending humanitarian aid to Iraq such as sugar and small amount of medicine.

He hopes that when the group is growing bigger it will be able to get more supplies to Iraq.

Sykes said the IBI is growing. "Since we have got publicity in Britain we have had maybe 3 or 4 members join our group every week.

"We have now more than 100 businessmen interested on what we are doing in Iraq", he added.

The volume of trade exchange between Iraq and Britain in the year prior to the sanctions reached 900 million pounds sterling.

The British businessmen were genuinely upest at the loss of Iraqi trade and feared British business was losing out to rivals from France, Russia and Germany.

British businessmen were among many European businessmen who came to Baghdad over the last few months.

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In a report dispatched on Monday, BBC correspondent said pressure mounts as the review of the sanctions by UN Security Council draws near.

The BBC interviewed chairman of the British Orient Firm for Transport Services who said after the elapse of more than four years nothing to do to stand idly by watching Iraqi market as it slips out of their hand and observe the rush of European firms to conclude deals with Iraq.

Orient chief noted that he supports and backs moves and initiatives by British businessmen, members of Iraqi-British Interests Group and politicians who are exercising pressure on British government to change stand towards Iraq.

A group of Spanish businessmen also arrived in Baghdad last Friday the same day the British businessmen have arrived.

The group is invited by the Iraqi Ministry of Transport and Communications to see Iraq's needs of this sector.

Spokesman of the Spanish delegation Gowzalo [name as received] told the BAGHDAD OBSERVER shortly after their arrival that they are ready to conclude deals with Iraq "it depends on the Iraqi government".

He hopes that Spanish firms would start work in Iraq in the near future.

He added that Spanish companies have already sent humanitarian aid to Iraq such as medicine and supply for hospitals in areas not covered by the UN-trade sanctions.

The delegation consists of 14 people and they will stay in Iraq for a week.

Gowzalo said this is the fifth time Spanish businessmen are in Iraq since the end of the US-led war against in 1991.

He said that next week a big Spanish delegation is also ariving in Baghdad.

Last month a big Italian delegation visited Baghdad. The delegation which consisted of 40 businessmen concluded some trade deals with Iraq to be implemented after the sanctions.

The delegation was invited by the Iraqi chambers of Commerce and Industries Federation.

It held talks with various Iraqi ministries such as trade, industry and minerals, oil, transport and communications and housing and construction.

Delegate Views Cooperation, Aid

JN2102104195 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0815 GMT 21 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 21 Feb (INA)—A visiting British business delegation has expressed the willingness of British firms to sign joint contracts with Iraq to implement projects for roads, bridges, and housing units.

During a meeting with Housing and Reconstruction Minister Dhiyab al-Ahmad, Edmund Sykes, head of the British delegation, said British firms are willing to provide the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction with various engineering, technical, and specialized equipment required by the Ministry's working teams.

The leader of the British business delegation expressed the eagerness of British firms to cooperate with Iraq in the field of housing and reconstruction to restore trade and industrial ties between Iraq and Britain.

Sykes added that the businessmen delegation came to Iraq to see firsthand the suffering of the Iraqi people as a result of the blockade and denial of food and medicine. He said British firms are eager to cooperate with Iraq, but this desire is restricted by the British Government's understanding of the blockade and the sanctions imposed against Iraq. Sykes said these firms are willing to supply Iraq with some humanitarian aid despite their government's stand toward the blockade.

Sykes further stressed that the British business delegation will actively put pressure on its government upon its return home to make it adopt a more positive stand toward Iraq and the lifting of the blockade imposed against it. He said the current British stand is incomprehensible.

The head of the delegation said the British public should have a clear idea about the great suffering of the Iraqi people. This should be done through an intensive media program that shows the British Government's failure to find good excuses for its continued negative attitude toward the lifting of the Iraq blockade.

During his meeting with the British delegation, Housing and Reconstruction Minister Mahmud Dhiyab al-Ahmad reviewed the extent of damage done to projects and buildings as a result of the strikes of the treacherous 30-state aggression, as well as the efforts made to reconstruct the damaged buildings.

The minister added that Iraq seriously looks forward to dealing with British firms in all fields of housing and reconstruction, especially supplying Iraq with heavy and specialized equipment and all other necessary equipment to build roads, bridges, and housing units.

AL-QADISIYAH newspaper has learned that the delegation has asked for a documented and detailed list of the projects which Iraq is planning to implement, including roads, bridges, and housing units, in addition to the heavy equipment which Iraq requires.

UK Urged To Bypass Sanctions

MS2102103995 London THE TIMES in English 21 Feb 95 p 10

[Report by James Bone and Michael Dynes: "Iraq Urges Britons to Dodge Curbs"]

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[FBIS Transcribed Text] Iraq is trying to use British businessmen to bypass United Nations regulations designed to monitor its imports of humanitarian supplies.

UN Security Council resolutions permit Iraq to sell a limited quantity of oil to raise money for humanitarian goods, provided Baghdad accepts UN monitoring to ensure the aid is distributed fairly throughout the country. But Baghdad has repeatedly rejected the UN terms, saying monitoring would violate its sovereignty.

Now the Iraqi Government is asking a group of visiting British businessmen to supply humanitarian goods, including sugar, flour, medicine and spare parts for sewage and water purification plants, and to accept payment either from a third country, or after sanctions have been lifted. The Iraqis say that British businesses could collect from Jordan—which imports Iraqi oil because of a loophole in the sanctions rules—or be paid once Baghdad is able to sell oil on the international market.

Acceptance of the Iraqi offer would enable Baghdad to continue to reject UN conditions for limited oil sales. It would also short-change victims of the Gulf War, who are waiting for Iraq to pay some of the proceeds of the limited oil sale to a UN compensation fund.

Edmund Sykes, who is leading a delegation of 25 British businessmen in Baghdad, said yesterday: "The Iraqis have said to us that whoever can help them today will get a plus" in future relations. The British delegation, which arrived in Baghdad on Friday, is exploring ways of resuming limited trade with Iraq in the hope of improving opportunities to capitalise on developing markets.

After four years of sanctions, Iraq has recently complained that it is running out of money to buy humanitarian goods. Last September, the Government cut food rations by almost 40 per cent. Each Iraqi is now entitled to a ration that only provides 50 per cent of a person's required energy intake.

The Foreign Office yesterday expressed concern at the British delegation's presence in Baghdad, which it said could "undermine the effect of sanctions".

Paper on Implications of Visit

JN1902161995 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0738 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 19 Feb (INA)—The newspaper AL-THAWRAH has asserted that the isolation of the unfair and wrongful anti-Iraqi U.S. stand is growing daily, giving way to broader and larger prospects, despite the tendencious attitude of the U.S. Administration.

In an article today, the paper views the arrival of a delegation of British businessmen in Iraq. The delegation is comprised of representatives of 27 firms specializing in the areas of water processing, pharmaceutical products, industries, and food supplies. The paper views this as a new indication of the world's growing need to deal with Iraq in all fields.

The paper, which speaks for the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, notes the moves made by several big members of the UN Security Council (UNSC), as well as several others outside the UNSC, to promote their trade and economic ties with Iraq, saying that these moves further consecrate the isolation of the U.S. position.

The paper recalls remarks made by former French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson when he summed up the position of the world community, saying that the continuation of the unfair sanctions is both unreasonable and unwarranted, given the agonies and suffering they have caused the Iraqi people, not to mention the risks they pose for regional balance and stability.

Cheysson added that the world has become fed up with the trite remarks drafted by Zionists at the U.S. State Department and uttered by Albright at the UNSC and her boss Clinton in the letters he sends to the Congress, which are full of anti-Iraq fabrications.

Concluding its article, the paper says: The world is well aware of what is happening. It seeks to look after its interests. People no longer accept letting their interests be harmed while the United States plunders the oil resources of the Arabian Gulf regardless of the legitimate interests of others.

Turkish Oil Official Urges Lifting Blockade

NC1802195295 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1830 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Ankara, 18 Feb (INA)—Khayr al-Din Ozan, chairman of the Turkish Oil Pipeline Company Potash [Turkish names as received], has called for lifting the unjust economic blockade imposed on Iraq.

Speaking to an INA correspondent, Ozan said: Since the blockade was imposed on Iraq I have called for lifting it, since it causes very high economic, financial, and moral losses for Turkey, too. The Turkish official stressed that the losses incurred by Turkey through the blockade on Iraq are financial and moral, and the latter cannot be calculated. He noted that since the start of the blockade on Iraq, the company has lost over $1.5 billion, while the total losses resulting from the halt in bilateral trade are estimated at $22 billion, a figure that is rising. [passage omitted]

He pointed out that the Turkish side had almost completed repairing and restoring the Iraqi oil pipeline and that work could be over within two weeks. He said he believes the Iraqi side has also completed maintenance work on the pipeline so that it will be fully ready if the blockade is lifted.

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UK Minister's Remarks on Depleted Uranium Shells Cited

JN1902153395 Baghdad INA in English 1220 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Baghdad, Feb. 19 (INA)—True arms has fallen silent in the aggression against Iraq and all is quiet on the battle front yet, the horrendous consequences still live on and war scars are every thing but easy to erase. [sentence as received]

Fatal health hazards brought about by the 30-state war go beyond Iraqi missiles batteries in "forbidden places." They extend frighteningly to radioactive artillery shells used by the coalition forces which the Western circles and politicians in the thick of the argument chosen to water down but faced by the bitter fact that depleted uranium shells (DU) are the cause of fatal illnesses including cancer and stomach ailments [sentence as received].

Recently and despite ill-veiled attempts to dump facts the British Defence Minister Malcolm Rifkind has admitted that the lethal weapon had been used and that the British forces used some 88 rounds during the campaign. While, as he put it, the U.S forces used much larger numbers of DU rounds both in tanks and A-10 aircraft.

The British Defense Ministry report was meant to be in reply to a report by British MP David Steel in which he voiced concern over the pollution impact on health in Iraq.

However, the Defence Ministry and to cast legitimacy over the issue used ill-founded claims that the Geneva Convention did permit the use of DU shells. Ironically enough the British minister failed to notice that the international law clearly envisages the weapon is prohibited and is dubbed as a serious violation of human rights. True the convention of 1949 did not plainly ban radioactive weapons on one hand, it did not allow the shells to be used on the other.

Moreover, the first protocol of 1977 attached to the above mentioned convention states that in any armed conflict the use of weapons should follow certain doctrines and should not go unchecked. The protocol also underscores that weapons with massive environmental health hazards should not be used. Random use of weapons against civilian and military targets is something banned under the Hague Convention of 1907.

The Defence Minister Rifkind chose to cross these facts, though very much willingly, when he wrote. "Throughout the Gulf conflict, the coalition partners took care to operate within the international law and only against military targets and facilities. Every effort was made to avoid civilians."

Many health specialists rang alarm that post-war increase in childhood cancer and mysterious swollen abdomens is at least in part due to radioactive shells. U.N. personnel and aid workers have seen children playing with empty shells, abandoned weapons, and destroyed tanks. In al-Basrah, a foreign doctor saw a child using a depleted uranium shells as a hand puppets.

Most scientists and doctors agree that a minimum radioaction is dangerous and the health risk becomes much greater once the projectiles has been fired.

Another report released by the British themselves would also cause embarrassment for Rifkind. The report finds that "there is enough uranium in Iraq and Kuwait to cause tens of thousands of potential deaths."

A study says that uranium may have already contaminated soil and drinking water in Iraq. The study goes on to warn that "if this is the case, Iraqis could be exposed to the radioactive and toxic effects of uranium for generations to come."

Needless to say the harm so far done to Iraqis is much greater to be watered down by the British minister of defence himself.

MIO Director, UN's Ekeus Continue Discussions

JN2002120595 Baghdad Republic of Iraq Radio Network in Arabic 1130 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Lieutenant General 'Amir Muhammad Rashid, director of the Military Industrialization Organization [MIO], this morning met with Rolf Ekeus, head of the UN Special Commission. Ekeus told the Iraqi News Agency that his discussions with Lt. Gen. 'Amir Muhammad Rashid were a continuation of last night's discussions. A third meeting will be held this evening.

MIO Technicians Meet Special Delegation

JN2002212895 Baghdad INA in Arabic 2100 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 20 Feb (INA)—Several technicians working for the Military Industrialization Organization [MIO] met with the delegation accompanying Mr. Rolf Ekeus, chairman of the UN Special Commission, this afternoon.

Tim Trevan, official spokesman for the UN Special Commission, told the Iraqi News Agency that another working session will be held with the Iraqi technicians tomorrow, Tuesday.

Saddam Chairs Council of Ministers Meeting

NC1802212795 Baghdad INA in Arabic 2050 GMT 18 Feb 93

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 18 Feb (INA)—President Saddam Husayn has chaired the eighth session of the Council of Ministers.

The Council reviewed the outcome of the visits his excellency's envoys paid to his brother Arab kings and presidents in Jordan, Morocco, Yemen, Sudan, Libya,

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Tunisia, Algeria, and Mauritania. The ministers have conveyed personal messages from his excellency to these leaders, explaining Iraq's relations with the UN Security Council, its compliance with the commitments involved in the Council's resolutions, and the need for the UN Security Council to honor its commitments to Iraq.

The Council of Ministers listened to a report by the foreign minister on the outcome of his visit to Turkey.

On the agenda was follow-up work on the implementation of disciplines governing the marketing of grain, the requirements of the coming season's crop, and other relevant decisions.

Saddam Presides Over RCC Meeting

JN1902165895 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1600 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 19 Feb (INA)—His Excellency President Saddam Husayn has presided over a meeting of the Revolution Command Council (RCC).

The meeting was attended by National Assembly Speaker Sa'di Mahdi Salih and Foreign Minister Muhammad Sa'id al-Sahhaf.

Foreign Minister Returns After Turkey, Morocco Visits

JN1602212895 Baghdad Republic of Iraq Radio Network in Arabic 2100 GMT 16 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Foreign Minister Muhammad Sa'id al-Sahhaf returned to Baghdad yesterday after paying official visits to Turkey and Morocco. [passage omitted]

Saddam's Envoy Returns From Algeria, Mauritania Visit

JN1802094595 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0900 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 18 Feb (INA)—Dr. Ahmad Murtada, minister of transport and communications and President Saddam Husayn's personal envoy, today returned to Baghdad following a visit to Algeria and Mauritania.

The president's envoy delivered two messages from his excellency the president to the Algerian and Mauritanian president concerning developments of relations between Iraq and the UN Security Council and the fraternal ties between Iraq and the two sisterly countries.

PUK Claims 8 Killed in Inter-Kurdish Fighting

NC1902171795 Paris AFP in English 1417 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Nicosia, Feb 19 (AFP)—Eight people have died in fighting between rival Kurdish factions for control of a village in northern Iraq, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) said Sunday [19 February].

PUK official Muhammad Isma'il told AFP eight of his party's fighters were killed Saturday as they tried to capture the village of Seybardan east of the main town of Irbil from their Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) rivals.

Seybardan is near the Kaznazan region, which was seized last month by the KDP as it tried to recapture Irbil from the PUK.

Isma'il, contacted from Cyprus by telephone, also said clashes erupted Saturday at Banjwin near the Iranian border and at Bani-Harir, east of Irbil.

However he denied reports by the Iranian news agency IRNA that fighting was going on around the PUK-held town of Rawandoz, which has been under siege for the past two weeks.

"The inhabitants of the town, besieged by the KDP, are living in difficult conditions," was all he would say.

The PUK and KDP, which control northern Iraq under a Western security umbrella in defiance of Baghdad, have been locked in a deadly power struggle since last May.

The PUK has controlled the Irbil and al-Sulaymaniyah regions since December, while the KDP holds land along the borders with Iran and Turkey.

PUK Peshemerga Reportedly Repulse Army Force

NC2002165195 (Clandestine) Voice of the People of Kurdistan in Arabic 1535 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Our correspondent in Kifri District reports that yesterday an Iraqi regime force tried to advance toward Kifri District from their position in Kahriz hamlet. Peshemerga forces of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK] and the local population confronted the attacking force and forced it to retreat. In retaliation, the regime's force directed machine-gun fire at Hayy al-Asra quarter without causing any casualties among civilians.

Delegation Head Meets U.S. Officials at Athens Conference

NC1902213695 Baghdad INA in Arabic 2050 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Athens, 19 Feb (MENA)—Dr. 'Abd-al-Razzaq al-Hashemi, director of the Foreign Relations Office of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party for the Iraqi regional command and head of the Iraqi delegation to the second international Athens conference, today met with the members of the American delegation to the conference.

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Dr. 'Abd-al-Razzaq al-Hashemi explained to the American delegation Iraq's legal and political commitments to the Security Council resolutions. He denied the biased allegations the U.S. administration makes, the objective of which is to perpetuate the unjust siege on Iraq.

The head and members of the Iraqi delegation to the conference also met with a number of Arab and international delegations and figures participating in the conference to explain Iraq's viewpoint, which is backed by documents, and the importance of supporting the just Iraqi demand to lift the oppressive siege of its people.

On the same note, Mr. Khalid 'Abd-al-Mun'im Rashid, member of the Iraqi delegation who was elected member of the presidency of the conference's morning session today, affirmed that keeping the siege on Iraq falls within an organized scheme to destroy the Iraqi people. He said that the siege is a mass crime which deserves punishment in accordance with international laws, whether in time of war or peace.

He clarified that continuing the siege on Iraq is the result of a deep grudge and derives from suspect political objectives that have nothing to do with the Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Khalid 'Abd-al-Mun'im Rashid reviewed the effects of continuing the siege and the grave shortage of food and medicines.

Columnist Ridicules U.S. Stand on Blockade

JN1802110495 Baghdad AL-THAWRAH in Arabic 9 Feb 95 p 2

[Article by Mu'ayyad 'Abd-al-Zahrah from the "Standpoint" column: "The U.S. Bull and the Iraqi Rock"]

[FBIS Translated Text] We are not exaggerating when we say with full confidence that our patience, resistance, and challenge of the U.S. tyrant have begun to achieve positive results. Washington's position regarding its blockade of our people throughout the past few years and up to the present time is like that of a bull which keeps knocking its head on a rock. It will continue doing so until its horns are smashed, causing it to weaken and retreat dejectedly against its own wishes.

All signs and indications confirm today that because of its arrogant attitude the United States has become isolated and lacks any solid ground. No matter how it tries to kick up dust in its blind fury, it will only reap more ridicule before the solid wall of Iraqi facts and the clear vision of the world, which acknowledges that Iraq has fulfilled all its obligations and is only demanding its rights in return.

Washington has made, and continues to make, cheap and crude allegations with the approach of every periodic review of the sanctions for the sake of troublemaking, suppressing the facts, and keeping the situation as it is, such as its recent claim about the so-called Kuwaiti equipment which Iraqis have taken away and the subject of missing Kuwaitis. Before that, Washington bemoaned human rights, and its representative used photographs of the construction going on in Iraq as an excuse to maintain the blockade. It seems that the U.S. bag is not quite empty of allegations, despite the fact the United States has become an object of ridicule before the whole world due to its exposed objectives.

In fact, despite its obvious duplicitous and discriminatory nature, Washington's policy in this regard has become funny and ridiculous, especially regarding the so-called missing Kuwaitis, where Washington appears more catholic than the pope and opportunist to the point of disgust. The United States has many persons missing in action as a result of its wars and interventions in world affairs for many years, yet it has not created such a big uproar over them. It has not dealt with them the way it is blackmailing Iraq now over this issue.

Indeed, U.S. persistence in inflicting harm on our people and using the blockade weapon against them is largely due to the power of illusion and the illusion of power which motivate the United States and increase its sense of arrogance and superciliousness, following its miserable failure to achieve its objectives and general plan to swallow up the region, plunder its wealth, and dominate Iraq. Thus, the United States will continue with the policy of creating tension and fabricating allegations in order to keep and prolong the blockade in the hope that it would achieve what it could not through military aggression. But as we said, its position will continue to be like that of a bull who knocks its head on a rock and this will only lead to smashing its horns.

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Peres Interviewed on Talks With Musa, 'Arafat; NPT

On Talks With Musa, 'Arafat

TA1702145795 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1115 GMT 17 Feb 95

[Telephone interview with Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres by Nisim Mish'al on 17 February; from the weekly "Mish'al on Friday" program; place not given—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Mish'al] You will meet the Egyptian foreign minister in Paris today. There is a lot of tension between Israel and Egypt. Do you plan to make a new proposal to Egypt on the nuclear issue?

[Peres] No. I will try to defuse the tension because tension is not healthy. Look, Egypt has its positions and Israel has its positions, and the new thing in the Middle East is that when parties have contradicting positions, no one resorts to guns; we debate the issues. This is the way countries that live in peace settle matters between them.

[Mish'al] Yesterday, President Mubarak warned that if Rabin's anti-Egyptian declarations continue, things might become more complicated. Is Rabin stretching things vis-a-vis the Egyptians?

[Peres] I do not believe that Rabin made any public statements. He was speaking in a closed committee. Those who leaked his remarks did something wrong, and I am not sure that the leak was accurate. I cannot accept a situation in which, after we hold a closed meeting trying to evaluate matters, someone volunteers to create a scandal out of it. This, however, is one of those things that sometimes happen, and I believe we will overcome it as well.

[Mish'al] Yesterday you and Mr. Rabin met Yasir 'Arafat. So, after Gaza and Jericho, you are offering Janin first?

[Peres] Yes, I offered Janin first.

[Mish'al] Did 'Arafat accept?

[Peres] I believe he did. He may not have been too enthusiastic about it—because he wanted more, not because he rejected what he was offered—but nevertheless he accepted it.

[Mish'al] And when will you give him more?

[Peres] After we reach a security agreement. Most of all, we care about bolstering our security. As for 'Arafat, it is not all up to him, and 'Arafat cannot, and we are not asking him to, provide us with security. We are asking him to do whatever he can and should do, which is not limitless.

[Mish'al] Are you satisfied that he is doing everything he can against terrorism?

[Peres] We got the impression that he has started dealing with this issue seriously. Yesterday he told us that he had done several things: He set up security courts, appointed prosecutors, and arrested persons who are suspected of dealing in terror. When we asked him about reports in Israel that he later released these people, which he denied vehemently, and added that he had prevented at least six attacks against Israel.

[Mish'al] Before we conclude this interview, I would like to ask you about the new book you wrote.

[Peres] Before we do this, let me tell you: I have been reading in the papers that all kinds of people appointed themselves members of the burial society to bury the peace process. The peace process is alive and well, and will continue. It has come across some difficulties, but it will overcome them, and we will certainly reach our predesignated goals.

[Mish'al] So you are not joining any of the societies?

[Peres] Not at all. I am still looking for better things to do with my life. [passage omitted]

On NPT, 'Arafat Meetings

JN1702204295 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1950 GMT 17 Feb 95

[Interview with Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres by correspondents Yusuf Dakkash and Jean-Marie Quote in Paris on 17 February; from the "Panorama" program—recorded; questions are in Arabic, answers in French with superimposed Arabic translation]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Correspondent] Mr. Minister. You have arrived in Paris at a time when Israeli-Egyptian relations are going through a difficult stage because of the Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT]. Are you setting a bad example for the rest of the parties in the Middle East?

[Peres] On the contrary. We will show that in the case of a disagreement, war will not break out, but dialogue will begin. There are arguments instead of weapons. For example, Britain, France, and Germany have differences. This is natural in politics. It is natural to have problems and different views. We are working to settle the differences. Tonight, I will meet with 'Amr Musa, and we shall continue our dialogue. In principle, I tell our Egyptian friends: Israel's position on nonproliferation has not changed since Camp David. The position is still the same; the conditions are still the same; the situation is still the same; the distance between Egypt and Israel is still the same. In my opinion, time has not changed the foundations of Camp David. If we reach peace in the Middle East—and I am certain about that—then we will change the strategic conditions. The nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and peace are like a two-story house; the first story is peace, while the second story is a Mediterranean region free of any nuclear threat. The second story cannot be built without the first.

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[Correspondent] What about the recent meeting between Yitzhaq Rabin and Yasir 'Arafat? No date has been set for the redeployment and the elections.

[Peres] A date has been fixed. [sentence as heard] It is true that 'Arafat asked us to fix a date, but we said that it is difficult to set a date for two reasons. First, we do not have solutions to the known problems and we do not have solutions to the unknown problems. The situation in the West Bank is different from that of Gaza. Second, the security problem. We have asked the Palestinians to take more significant and tougher measures against terrorism. They have started doing this. But what has been done is not enough. The redeployment is largely dependent on the Palestinians' ability to maintain their security, not ours. We have made a proposal, and the Palestinians have agreed to a meeting between myself and 'Arafat in three weeks, to be followed a week later by a meeting among 'Arafat, Yitzhaq Rabin, and myself. These dates have been fixed to discuss the developments in the three or four coming weeks.

[Correspondent] But don't you think your demands will weaken 'Arafat's position?

[Peres] We do not ask 'Arafat to do anything that is not in the Declaration of Principles [DOP]. Under the DOP, they are responsible for their security, and not ours. All we are asking them is to implement their pledges.

[Correspondent] How do you view plans to separate the Israelis from the Palestinians?

[Peres] We do not talk about a physical separation or building a fence or a wall between the Palestinians. Nor do we propose an economic separation. What we say is that the Palestinians should run their own life and affairs and that the Israelis should run their own life and affairs. Ours is a moral rather than a political option. I have said several times that we do not want to dominate Palestinian economic life. We are planning to establish an industrial compound along the border between us and the Palestinians to create cooperation opportunities between us. We and the Palestinians have agreed to that and even defined the places where the industrial compound will be established.

[Correspondent] What about negotiations with Syria? Have they reached a deadlock?

[Peres] Yes. At present, there is not much between us and the Syrians. In our view, the Syrian president has decided to divorce the war strategy, but he has not yet decided to marry the peace strategy. At present, he is somewhere between the two. We clearly say that Israel has experience. We have signed three agreements with three parties. Each time, we used the same method. Each party came to the negotiating table with his position and then negotiations were held on the difference between the two positions. However, no party accepted the other party's position before negotiations. President al-Asad is asking Israel to announce its readiness to carry out a total withdrawal from the Golan and to put an end to settlement.

[Correspondent] How do you view Europe's role in the peace process in general and France's role in particular?

[Peres] Europe's role did not begin with negotiations. It is a historical and old one. There is a natural, historical, political, and geographic tie between the Mediterranean, France, and Europe. The Europeans in general and France in particular can play a role. Now, there is a proposal that Europe introduce a new idea in the Middle East, namely, the use of information and computers in the educational area. More than 60 percent of the region's inhabitants are under 18 years of age. Europe's role is clear, important, and essential

On Differences With Egypt

TA1802143795 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 0800 GMT 18 Feb 95

[Telephone interview with Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres, in Paris, by 'Adi Talmor, in the studio; from the "In the Current Situation" program—live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Talmor] Good morning to you in Paris, Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres.

[Peres] Good morning to you.

[Talmor] Mr. Peres, can we say that in your meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Musa you settled Israel's differences of opinion with Egypt over the nuclear weapons issue, or is it merely a brief lull on the way to a great explosion and a total rift?

[Peres] It is neither of the two. We returned to a track of orderly work. We have still not reached complete understanding regarding the issue of signing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT], but we have time; we are in no rush.

[Talmor] What formula, if any, can bridge the profound gap between Israel and Egypt over this problematic issue?

[Peres] Look, Israel will not budge from its basic stands, but we will try to be as forthcoming as possible in matters of language and style.

[Talmor] You are referring to language and style, but not to substance. Is this correct?

[Peres] Yes. Our substantial positions have not changed since the Camp David days. There is no reason for such a change.

[Talmor] This means that Egypt has to change its positions, does it not?

[Peres] I do not think so. Each side can adhere to its positions. It is acceptable in countries that maintain understanding and friendly relations to also have differences of opinion.

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[Talmor] Nevertheless, Mr. Peres, how can you explain all this racket caused by Egypt? Is it afraid of Israel's nuclear potential, or is this being used as an excuse to pursue a totally different end?

[Peres] First, I do not think it is my duty to act as a commentator—certainly not of the kind that only worsens the situation. Egypt has its own position. The issue was raised because the time for renewing the NPT has come. The NPT was signed many years ago and has been in a dormant state since then. It is up for renewal in April, and Egypt has to decide whether it is signing or not. We are not pressuring it to sign; this is not our duty. I think, however, that Egypt, for its own reasons, and the United States, for its, should be interested in signing the NPT. We are not standing in their way, but on the other hand, we are unwilling to forgo our interests. I assume, therefore, that a solution will be found.

[Talmor] What kind of damage has been done to the peace process and the general atmosphere in the Middle East as a result of Egypt's statements and actions in this issue?

[Peres] Look, we are trying to repair this damage. Yesterday we had a good working meeting that was held in a good atmosphere. I hope that things will be worked out shortly and that we can return to the kind of relations we have become accustomed to maintaining with Egypt. Altogether, I think it is a passing cloud. We have peaceful relations with Egypt and friendly relations with the Egyptian leadership. We accord appropriate respect to the Egyptian leadership, and we do not intend to go on dealing with this worn out affair.

[Talmor] What did 'Amr Musa tell you about Rabin's remarks on the Egyptian Foreign Ministry and foreign minister, to which President Mubarak himself has already referred?

[Peres] Look, he was not happy about these remarks, as you can well imagine. I told him that the prime minister said nothing to this effect in public.

[Talmor] Was he satisfied with your explanation?

[Peres] I think he was more satisfied with.... [pauses] Look, I do not want to describe our meeting as a boxing match. We did not box yesterday. I told 'Amr Musa that the prime minister, myself, and all of us want to work harmoniously and respectfully, both with Egypt's president and foreign minister. Israel's and Egypt's foreign relations or their bilateral relations cannot be based on this or that statement or leak.

[Talmor] Meanwhile, Mr. Peres, Yasir 'Arafat yesterday denied what you had said yesterday, namely that he has already accepted the proposal to take over municipal responsibility over Janin. On what did you base your assessment that he has already accepted this?

[Peres] Look, I had met with Mr. Abu-'Ala' [Ahmad Quray'] before that and discussed this proposal, so 'Arafat should not have been surprised by the proposal. I do not know why he rejected it later on. Perhaps he has greater expectations. We will deal with this too.

[Talmor] Are you saying he will have to accept it eventually, because he has no other alternative?

[Peres] We are not forcing anything on him. We are offering something good, because the Palestinian leadership has asked us to transfer to it municipal and economic responsibility. It is true that it wants to assume more responsibilities and to see the redeployment. It is not rejecting the municipal and economic aspects; it simply wants the third thing, but this third thing hinges to a great extent on the security arrangements. Look, any negotiation process can be described as a series of crises, but it can also be described as a series of attempts to reach an understanding. I would not regard the situation in terms of a crisis, but rather in terms of negotiations. Whenever we encounter an obstacle or a problem, we try to overcome it.

[Talmor] I understand you will make such an effort in your meeting with Yasir 'Arafat in Paris today.

[Peres] Yes. I must say I was somewhat surprised, because when we last met it was not clear that he would arrive in Paris. When he comes we will hold a meeting and discuss the issues. This is what we always do.

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English at 1100 GMT on 18 February, reporting on Peres' meeting with Musa, adds: "Last night Peres held talks in Paris with Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa in an attempt to solve the dispute over the supervision of nuclear facilities. Speaking to reporters after the meeting Peres and Musa both said the meeting had been friendly. Musa said that if Israel does not sign the NPT it will very much adversely affect the atmosphere in the Middle East, but that peace between Egypt and Israel would continue. Peres said that Israel is not seeking a crisis with Egypt and would continue to look for ways to solve the problem."]

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 1200 GMT on 18 February adds: "Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres issued a clarification statement in Paris today following his meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, in which the two ironed out the recent bilateral tension in the wake of Egypt's demand that Israel join the NPT. In his statement, Peres says that he explained to his Egyptian counterpart that, contrary to reports taken out of context, Prime Minister Rabin greatly respects President Mubarak and Minister Musa. Israel is convinced of the pivotal role Egypt has in furthering the peace process. Minister Peres says it is only natural that there are differences of opinion even among friends. Peres says his meeting with Mr. Musa proved that they can be overcome and that outstanding problems, including the nuclear issue, can be discussed with mutual respect and in a conciliatory manner."]

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Peres To Meet With Mubarak on Nuclear Issue

TA1902191395 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1800 GMT 19 Feb 95

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres will leave for Egypt this week to meet with President Husni Mubarak in a bid to reduce bilateral tensions regarding the signing of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Our political correspondent 'Imanu'el Rosen reports that the Egyptian president invited Peres to Cairo.

Foreign Ministry Officials Support Nuclear Gesture

TA1802164895 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1600 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Our political correspondent reports that Foreign Ministry officials support an Israeli gesture toward Egypt in the form of agreeing to discuss the nuclear issue in the arms-control group operating within the framework of the multilateral talks. In the past, Israel was firmly opposed to discussing the issue within the framework of the multilateral talks.

Peres Urges PLO Not To Suspend Talks, Denies Iran Contacts

TA2102123195 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1100 GMT 21 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres today called on the PLO Executive Committee, which is to meeting Cairo, not to pass a resolution suspending talks with Israel. Our correspondent Eli Bohadana reports on Peres' appeal to the Palestinians during a visit to the south:

[Begin Peres recording] There is no way back from the peace process for the Palestinians or for us. If we are facing difficulties, then the way out is not to stop the talks, but to bolster them and to find solutions. [end recording]

[Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew at 1100 on 21 February reports that "Peres denied German reports about Israeli-Iranian contacts over navigator Ron Arad's release and said the reports only cause damage. In a recorded passage, Peres said: "It is difficult to measure the damage, but it is simply a report that will cause a great deal of sorrow to people who already know too much sorrow."]

Rabin Lists Demands for PA Action; French Minister Comments

TA1902193095 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1900 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin added that at his meeting with Yasir 'Arafat, he had told the PLO chairman that there was no political impediment to the implementation of the next stage of the Declaration of Principles. The PLO chairman, however, would have to act against terrorism in several ways: 'Arafat would have to ensure that the Palestinian Authority [PA] was in control of the territories under its responsibility; the PA must ban all incitement against Israel and stop any preparations to commit terrorist attacks; and the PA would have to ensure that there were no unauthorized armed militias.

Prime Minister Rabin spoke via satellite with French Defense Minister Francois Leotard. The French minister accused Iran, Iraq, and Libya of threatening the stability of the region. Leotard disclosed that these three countries were purchasing long-range ballistic missiles. This was reported by our correspondent Gid'on Kouts.

Rabin Remarks on Decision To Ease Territories' Closure

Says Action Goes Against Security Interests

TA1902174895 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1700 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin said that in deciding to ease the closure on the territories after meeting with PLO Chairman Yasir 'Arafat, he had acted against Israel's security interests in order to prevent tension with the Palestinians. Yitzhaq Rabin explained that such tension could have caused many Palestinians to lose faith in the peace process. Our correspondent Gid'on Kouts reports that the prime minister made these remarks during a satellite-relayed conference with French Defense Minister Francois Leotard.

Netanyahu Criticizes Rabin Comments

TA2002070395 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0600 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] In an interview this morning, Likud Leader Binyamin Netanyahu said he was astounded to hear Mr. Rabin's remarks about acting against Israel's security interests in his decision to alleviate the closure on the territories. He called on Rabin not to lift the closure before he takes determined action against terror. Knesset Member Netanyahu said that Rabin must tell 'Arafat that as long as the latter does not do enough against terror the closure cannot be lifted.

Likud Files No-Confidence Motion

TA2002102395 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1000 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] This morning, the Likud Knesset faction filed a motion of no confidence in the government over last night's remark by Prime Minister Rabin that in deciding to ease the closure imposed on the territories, he acted against Israel's security interests.

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Our correspondent Hayim Hecht reports that the Knesset will debate the no-confidence motion on 27 February.

Rabin Defends Stand on Easing of Closure

TA2102121695 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 21 Feb 95 p 2

[Report by Liat Collins]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin yesterday defended his decision to ease the closure of the territories despite the threat.

Although the closure had prevented terror attacks during the last month, strict enforcement would cause such economic hardship among Palestinians that the situation could explode, he said.

"Although we could impose a one-sided total separation—we almost don't need Palestinian workers now because of the import of foreign workers—the separation should be imposed gradually," Rabin reportedly said at the meeting.

Regarding economic aid, he said: "If we give this money to Gaza, we cannot be sure today that it would go toward creating employment. I don't want to elaborate."

Rabin said he differentiated between the closure and continued political negotiations. He repeated his stand that terror is the main obstacle to the negotiations, and that by creating economic hardship, more Palestinians would be pushed into extremism and terror.

"If only life was so simple. It's not all black and white," Rabin said. "If the Palestinian Authority doesn't realize its obligations on combating terror, it will make the continuation of the peace process much harder. Therefore, we must continue the talks with the Palestinians, but make them conditional on measures which answer Israeli security needs."

He said the closure, however, had improved public feeling and increased support for the peace process. "It's significant that the opinion polls show a rise in support from 35 percent to 56 percent," he said. [passage omitted]

Rabin Appoints New Ministers; Sarid Warns of Resignation

TA2102120695 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1100 GMT 21 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] 'Uzi Bar'am is the new minister of the interior and Shim'on Shetrit is the new minister for religious affairs. This was announced this morning by Prime Minister Rabin in a special cabinet meeting.

The Meretz faction, which wanted the Interior Ministry for Yosi Sarid, is furious with the prime minister's decision. Jack Katzenell reports:

[Begin recording] [Katzenell] For a few months, 'Uzi Bar'am will be minister of the interior as well as minister for tourism. Shim'on Shetrit will be minister for religious affairs and will continue to hold his old portfolio in the Economic Planning Ministry. [passage omitted]

Both Shetrit and Bar'am are caretakers in their new ministries. Prime Minister Rabin said on Sunday that later in the year, he will coopt two new ministers to the cabinet and then, there could be a general reshuffle.

The Meretz ministers who wanted the Interior Ministry for Yosi Sarid were furious with the prime minister's decision. Amnon Rubinstein said Meretz would not stand for it:

[Rubinstein] Let us down is an understatement. We won't accept this decision. We voted against it in the government. We are convening the faction to decide what we shall do this afternoon. We cannot accept this decision. It is a total lack of consideration for our wait and our contribution to a collective responsibility in the face of what has been happening in the Labor Party. I do not think there is a precedent for such disproportion between the representation of two partners—Labor and Meretz.

[Katzenell] Meretz has already made it clear that it is not going to leave the coalition over the issue of the cabinet portfolios, but it has been making thinly veiled threats to vote against the new appointments in the Knesset. Yosi Sarid says he may resign from the cabinet, but will not decide until after the Meretz caucus meeting. [end recording]

Turkey Said To Uncover Iranian Nuclear Smuggling Ring

TA2002200895 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1800 GMT 20 Feb 95

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] Here are initial details about the discovery of a network that smuggled materials used in the manufacture of nuclear weapons to Iran. According to information that reached Jerusalem this week, the Turkish security authorities arrested several members of the network in Istanbul a few days ago. They were found in possession of plutonium and osmium. Our political correspondent 'Imanu'el Rosen reports that the members of the network kept in telephone contact with several officials, including the Iranian deputy defense minister, who managed to give them an advance payment of $50,000.

Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres said today that according to information he received in Paris, Iran will be able to produce its first nuclear bomb within three years. A senior Moscow official claimed today that the Russian decision to supply four nuclear reactors to Iran will help the Iranians manufacture a nuclear bomb within a few years.

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Foreign Minister on U.S. Debt Write-Off, Proliferation

JN1802194495 Amman Jordan Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti has said it was agreed with the U.S. Administration to accelerate writing off the rest of Jordanian debts to the United States, which amount to $488 million, during this year and in one package.

This came in a statement made by the minister to our political affairs correspondent upon his return from Washington today, where he participated in the five-way ministerial meeting of foreign ministers of Jordan, Egypt, Israel, the United States, and the official in charge of international relations in the Palestinian self-rule authority.

At the meeting, discussions dealt with ways of advancing the negotiations on the Palestinian-Israeli track, and declaring a Middle East area free of nuclear weapons.

[Begin recording] [al-Kabariti] In order for the international community to be able to break the cycle of violence, it should try to break the siege imposed on the Palestinian people, which starves them and which is considered a sort of collective economic punishment.

[Correspondent Kassab Samawi] Your Excellency the minister, there is a crisis concerning renewal of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Has an Arab position on this subject been reached?

[Al-Kabariti] In fact, we in Jordan, like all Arab countries, cannot feel safe in light of a nuclear arsenal and reactors on our border without international supervision on these things. The subject is not the signing of the treaty. Most Arab countries, including Jordan and Egypt, signed this treaty in 1968. Employing pressure in order to sign this treaty can be done through several formulas, such as the proposals to renew the treaty for a limited period, adding guarantees to the treaty, or abstaining from voting or expressing reservation. I believe that there will be no withdrawal from this treaty. All these and other issues will be discussed within the framework of the Arab League and the nonaligned countries. God willing, there will be a unified position before the meeting on 17 April.

During our talks with the U.S. Administration, it was agreed that the U.S. Administration will present a draft law on writing off Jordanian debts, which amount to $488 million, in one package during fiscal year 1995, instead of the first proposal of writing them off in 1995 and 1996. [end recording]

King Addresses Paris Middle East Symposium

JN1802205195 Amman Jordan Television Network in English 2000 GMT 18 Feb 95

[Address by King Husayn "at the opening ceremony of UNESCO's international symposium on the future of the Mediterranean after the peace process" in Paris; date not given; from the "News at Ten" feature—live via satellite]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] It is a great pleasure to be asked to address this symposium. For many years now, both Crown Prince Hasan and I have been addressing symposia on subjects such as the future of the Middle East. I always felt somewhat uneasy, discussing this topic, when it seemed that the most likely future for the Middle East was no future at all.

I cannot begin to describe how it feels to know that our region, finally, has a future to look forward to. But, there is much to do if that future is to be made real for our peoples. We cannot afford to sit back and congratulate ourselves upon peace-making, for already we face the demands of peace-building. The Arab-Israeli conflict has shattered the economies of the Middle East. Massive and constant expenditure on weapons has wasted our resources. Chronic instability has prevented real development from touching our daily lives. As a result, we have income disparities, unserviceable burdens, and over-extended public sectors. We have poverty, unemployment, and stunted educational and health systems. We do not, ladies and gentlemen, have promising conditions for regional stability and prosperity, or for human happiness.

Jordan believes that things can be different. We believe that the economies of the region are capable of rapid, widely-shared and sustainable growth, given the material and human resources of the Middle East and the interest and assistance of the international community. Our economies will recover, bringing great benefits to our peoples. But, we need time, investments, and above all, vision.

Middle Eastern economies need to sustain average growth of 6 percent if living standards are to improve tangibly. This demands a new approach. For our part, we will do all we can to maintain macro economic stability. We will continue to implement the kind of legal, administrative, and fiscal reforms that have made the EU describe Jordan as the most advanced country of the region in implementing market-oriented reforms. For we are keenly aware that the private sector must have the space to operate freely if domestic and foreign investments are to reinvigorate our jaded economies.

The Casablanca summit paved the way for a partnership between government and private business. Amman will host the follow-up conference later this year. We have also, I think, innovative mechanisms, such as a development bank for the Middle East and North Africa, an OECD for the Middle East, and a regional human development plan. We feel that investment in development projects, which serve the region and its peoples, will be essential. Such progress must be rooted in sound concepts, and we seek the support of international financial institutions, governments and small businesses and multinational corporations alike.

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Joint endeavors, such as the Jordan Rift Valley Development Plan and the beginnings of regional free trade around 'Aqaba and Elat will help to shape an environment conducive to real development. Indeed, our long-term goal is to liberalize and dismantle all barriers in the region, whether in terms of trade, investment, labor, capital, or services. We want ultimately to arrive at a Middle East Free Trade Agreement, MEFTA, along the lines of EFTA or NAFTA. The vision of an open Middle East, unshackled from the bonds of conflict and free to play a dynamic role in the world economy, has sustained us on the path to peace and will continue to inspire us in the future. However, we are all aware that it is not possible to realize such a vision without the solid foundations provided by regional stability.

Jordan, therefore, believes that self-regulating regional mechanisms of security and cooperation will be essential to the future of the Middle East and the Mediterranean region. The multilateral component of the peace process provides a great framework for our common future. The multilaterals are organized in five working groups: arms control and security, refugees, regional economic development, water, and the environment. This categorization brings to mind the four baskets of the Helsinki process, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. We in Jordan feel that this conceptual framework can contribute to a lasting peace and we have long called for a Helsinki process, a Conference on Security and Cooperation for the Middle East Mediterranean region, a CSCME. It is gratifying to note that other regional parties are also calling for such a process.

We all recognize the need for a neutral low-key forum at which to address the common challenges of security and cooperation in a global idiom. Contentious issues—I am thinking of borders, resources, security—could easily disrupt the peace for which we have all worked so hard.

A CSCME would provide a focus for nonmilitary solutions, for surely it is plain that military solutions are no solutions at all. The recognition of common goals and aspirations, the building of structures, of interconnection, and mutual aid—these are the only lasting solutions.

The CSCME would assist in the evolution of a common regional vision. This vision must encompass certain fundamentals, as in Europe. It requires a commitment to communication over conflict, democratization over dictatorship, human rights over tyranny, and international law over chaos.

Jordan's advocacy of CSCME rests on the conviction that the future of the Middle East depends on such a vision. Backed by appropriate instruments and implemented across the region, the experience of the international community will be essential if we wish to make progress here.

Ladies and gentlemen: I believe our region has much to offer the world. The fact that we are discussing the future in such forward- looking terms is in itself cause for optimism. However, let us be clear that there will be difficulties. The next few months, the next few years, will not be easy or smooth in any way, but they are perhaps the most important times in the history of the region, and the time in which the support and understanding of the international community will be most crucial. And, if in the difficulties ahead the Middle East seems, sometimes, to be in darkness, let us remember that darkness does not always mark the absence of light, but can be nothing more than a shadow cast by the achievements to come. Thank you.

'Text' of King Husayn AL-AHRAM Interview

JN1902103795 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic 19 Feb 95 p 28

["Text" of interview with King Husayn by Cairo AL-AHRAM chief editor Ibrahim Nafi' at "the Royal Palace" in Amman; date not given—published in coordination with AL-AHRAM]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Nafi'] How do you view the future of the peace negotiations in the region in light of the recent clear Israeli intransigence? In the near future, is it perceivable that such important parties as Syria and Lebanon will join the negotiations?

[Husayn] Without doubt, I am concerned over the current developments and various possibilities regarding the peace process both at present and in the future. Let us recall the beginning of this process. We, along with Egypt, had the same starting point at the Madrid conference; namely, we accepted Security Council Resolution 242 and also Resolution 338, which focuses on holding negotiations to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict, in order to reach a solution according to the basis of this resolution.

Egypt played a great role and offered much for the cause of peace. At a certain phase, Egypt chose the path of peace through its own capabilities and efforts. Later, all parties concerned decided to proceed along the path of peace and meet in Madrid. For us in Jordan, the peace option was demanded by all sectors of the Jordanian people, so we decided to move along the same path.

We provided an umbrella that would allow our Palestinian brothers in the camps to determine their fate on the [Palestinian] national soil. This was in harmony with our decision of 1974 which was supported by the Islamic World. This decision directly terminated our responsibility toward the Palestinians and granted it to the party that represents the Palestinian Arab people [the PLO]. From this premise, we went to Washington and discussed the Jordanian- Israeli agenda. However, we only approved and signed this agenda after we were surprised that our Palestinian brothers had discovered another way; namely, direct negotiations with Israel, and after they announced an agreement known as the Oslo agreement. Afterward, we signed the agenda. We always insisted that negotiations must lead to peace, rather than making peace first and negotiating all points later.

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Sir, why did matters take some time? Regarding the Palestinian- Israeli dimension, we wonder why our Palestinian brothers agreed with the Israeli side on the principle of reaching a phased solution? I believe—and I could be mistaken—that the main reasons are that the process needed confidence-building measures and people's acceptance of this idea as well as a change that can be brought about by peace in terms of changing the situation which used to prevail to another situation that should prevail; namely, returning rights to their owners.

At the same time, it was necessary to take into consideration people's living conditions and the change, which should be tangible, so the people can live a better life—I mean the sons of the West Bank and Gaza—by establishing the organs that can represent the Palestinians before the world, which is ready to extend aid and help change people's lives from what they used to be to what they should be. I believe that things have moved this way.

Considering the current phase, we should know to what extent objectives have been achieved, and whether anything has obstructed and postponed matters on any side. We pray to God to grant us all success in removing these obstacles and not to make us proceed on a path that will lead us to despair, confusion, and wasting everyone's chance to live in just, honorable, and lasting peace which will achieve all the peoples' objectives.

While viewing the current situation, it seems to me that there is a problem related to credibility. Regarding the situation itself, is this the atmosphere we were all searching for after the Oslo agreement? It was expected that an atmosphere of reassurance and comfort would be created to encourage the peace camp to move forward. No, this is not what was expected. I cannot hold a specific party responsible for the current atmosphere. However, we all are responsible, and all parties should assume their responsibilities, so this opportunity will not be wasted in anyway whatsoever.

[Nafi'] Has the recent Washington five-way meeting among Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, and the United States achieved any progress? Or are we to say that its failure to come out with clear decisions has bolstered the doubts of Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinian brethren?

[Husayn] Although I am not fully aware of all that happened at that meeting, it was generally a positive meeting and showed eagerness to advance the peace process. However, I say that neither I nor anybody else has the right to interfere in any bilateral relationship, be it the Palestinian-Israeli relationship or any other relationship. Still, my brother President Mubarak and I, as well as all our brothers and those who want to move from the current situation to a better situation for our peoples and their stability, are trying to support the efforts to establish peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis, but without going into the details.

The question of was it possible for the five-way meeting to arrive at a new mechanism? Personally, I do not believe so. The meeting was aimed to follow up the negotiations and support the peace process.

[Nafi'] Now if we view a clear problem, such as the settlements problem, will Israel continue to build settlements for a long time to come despite the big problem this poses to the peace efforts?

[Husayn] Sir, my opinion is clear. The whole issue is based on Resolution 242, which provides for the restoration of the occupied territory in return for peace and the inadmissibility of the occupation of territory by war. This is clear. Our position is clear and has not changed. Because we are a direct party, we say that our position states that the territories must be returned in full and Arab sovereignty over them, including Jerusalem, must be secured. Besides, there must be a special status for the holy places and the city must become the city of peace for all believers in the Almighty God. This is an unchanging position. But, at the same time, there are numerous problems. For example, "yesterday" marked the [first] anniversary of the Hebron massacre. Such an event should not have happened in an atmosphere which was supposed to be one of peace in view of the Oslo agreement and the move toward peace. Likewise, the numerous events and explosions and killings which took place should not have taken place. Had they not happened, we would have been in a better situation to lay down the sound foundations for the continuation of the peace process and addressing the settlements and other issues. I am not saying that an issue like this cannot be addressed. Yes, it must be raised. However, the whole atmosphere is not the one which we had expected to crystallize at the beginning of the peace process.

[Nafi'] Regarding the issue of Jerusalem, does your majesty believe that the Palestinian Authority must do something tangible in this regard? What is your specific stand on the question of Jerusalem being the capital of a future Palestinian state?

[Husayn] I am responsible for the Arab sector of the city. This has been stated with complete clarity by Resolution 242. However, in accordance with the Palestinian-Israeli agreement, the question of Jerusalem is postponed until the final status negotiations.

And it is being said that final status issues will be discussed immediately in the current stage, without waiting for the final stage.

At the beginning of my statement, I tried to indicate that the current situation is frustrating. The process should have taken some time so that people would have been psychologically prepared for the situation, which, regrettably has not crystallized yet and only little of which has been achieved. We notice that instead of trust, there is mistrust, instead of reassurance, there is disquiet, instead of comfort, there is anger. There is blood that has been spilled and there are many problems. Is it logical to raise this issue now? What results can be reached?

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Regardless of all that, the objective must be clear; land in return for peace and the restoration of Palestinian authority over the Palestinian soil.

Regarding Jerusalem, sir, its western part has been the capital of Israel since it was established regardless of the countries which recognized this. However, the Arab side [of Jerusalem] cou'd be the symbol of peace between the two parties and both parties would achieve the required situation in it. This might happen one day, God willing, as a result of the negotiations thanks to the Palestinian efforts, Israel, or the efforts of others. The issue of the holy lands is another topic of discussion. Once again, I would like to reiterate that we, as Hashemites and Jordanians, do not have any objective in or ambition toward Jerusalem.

What took place was only an Israeli recognition, in the Washington Declaration and then in the [Jordanian-Israeli peace] treaty, that Jordan will continue its supervision during this period. Whether or not this issue has been mentioned in the Washington Declaration or elsewhere, this issue is sensitive for us, as well as for the Islamic world and the entire world.

The question which I would like to address to our brothers: What could have been said about the Washington Declaration, or the treaty, had the issue of Jerusalem been ignored?

The issue of Jerusalem will be tackled with time in accordance with the Palestinian-Israeli accord. We will continue to carry out our duty toward the holy places until a satisfactory and accepted solution is reached. We only want to do our duty, nothing more nothing less. At the same time, my personal feeling regarding the Islamic, Christian, and even the Jewish holy places is that they should not be placed under the sovereignty of this or that country, or any side. My personal feeling is that the holy places should unite all believers in God who should have the same rights. The Islamic holy places, for example, should belong to the entire Islamic world. Interfaith dialogue will turn Jerusalem, this small city and small land, as God wanted it to be, into a destination for all worshipers. Otherwise, tragedies will recur. I believe, this view will be accepted by people and all parties. This will help solve other problems.

Anyhow, sir, the issue is not in our hands and the responsible side is known. We support and help, to the best of our ability, the peace process to achieve its objectives.

[Nafi'] Your Majesty, is there a possibility of establishing a confederation between Jordan and the Palestinians?

[Husayn] I cannot propose, accept, or agree on such formulas. The discussion of such an issue will be useless before the Palestinian people restore their national soil and decide freely on the formula they want in their relations with Jordan. This is despite the fact that our relations are distinguished. In my view, any Palestinian or Israeli proposal will—in reality—cast doubts after the efforts that have been exerted.

[Nafi'] Now, the Islamic Resistance Movement in Gaza and the West Bank hints that a Palestinian civil war would erupt as a result of the practices carried out by the Palestinian Authority against the movement's opposition activities. What is your majesty's comment on this?

[Husayn] I am very sorry for all that is taking place and I am very pained by this.

[Nafi'] Some believe that Jordan is normalizing its relations with Israel hastily, whereas Egypt and other Arab states believe that, at present, priority should be given to achieving the comprehensive peace. What is your opinion?

[Husayn] We are with the comprehensive peace. However, sir, it is known that our brothers in Egypt made their move, that the Palestinians also moved, and that we all moved from the same starting point in Madrid. I say that until 1974 Jordan used to emphasize the need to implement Resolution 242 and regain all the occupied territories.

Now, however, and in light of what happened in the peace process, it is meaningless and unjustified to say that Jordan should stand idly by until all the issues are resolved, after which Jordan can address its own issues. Had this happened, no one would have cared about Jordan's state of affairs. We were duty bound to regain our own territory and water, and we have regained them in full, praise be to God.

Regarding the normalization of relations, it is difficult for Egypt, for example, to talk about the specifications of normalization. Matters were going on in a certain way. However, the current atmosphere and concept differ from the atmosphere that prevailed at the outset of the moves designed to achieve peace. Here in Jordan, things are different in terms of our situation on the ground and people's state of affairs.

Having regained our rights, our objective now is to build Jordan, enable its sons to lead a decent life, remove the differences among citizens, and create a new atmosphere. How can this be achieved if [Jordanian-Israeli] relations are not normal. In other words, people should be aware of the dividends of peace and search for what can be done in the future in light of peace. Changing people's lifestyle in times of peace is not easy. People know that there can be either war or peace, so half a peace is inconceivable.

The Syrian and Lebanese brothers joined us in the peace process in Madrid. Fraternal Egypt was in the lead and it endured and offered much, and we do not deny its credit. I do not see any justification for the atmosphere of criticism and accusations against Jordan in this regard because we found out at a certain phase that we should

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negotiate. We thus held direct negotiations and achieved results. Some, however, may have a different opinion, which is up to them.

We seek a comprehensive peace, and no one can perceive a comprehensive peace without Syria or Lebanon. God willing, a comprehensive peace will be achieved, and we are ready for everything that can support the peace march.

[Nafi'] What is your assessment of the opposition's role in Jordan regarding the cause of peace?

[Husayn] I believe there is much exaggeration about the opposition's role. The political climate in Jordan is democratic. The decision to go to Madrid resulted from the national conference which comprised all forces representing the Jordanian people. Moreover, matters passed through all constitutional phases. There might be opposition. We, however, have a national charter to which all have contributed. All schools of thought exist in Jordan, and it is a basic thing for the minority to respect the opinion of the majority.

[Nafi'] Let us return to the tracks of negotiations in the Middle East problem. Can we say that the chances for a peaceful settlement with Jordan were greater than those on other tracks? Or is this settlement itself facing dangers?

[Husayn] The dangers are there. There are parties that want to undermine any chance to achieve peace. Those parties may stand to benefit from their stands or it may be that they are convinced of their stands. However, my wish and hope is that the overwhelming majority may not be denied the peace chances made available to them. I hope that the peace advocates will be the winners.

[Nafi'] Given that the Jordanian and Palestinian tracks have achieved speedy progress toward an agreement, can it be said that through these two experiences, Israel wants to give an example of Israeli-Arab relations as Israel wants them to be? Or is it true that the limited number of problems on those two tracks has helped achieve speedy progress?

[Husayn] Regarding the Jordanian-Israeli track, the past stage has witnessed mutual respect which enabled us to restore our inalienable territorial and water rights, and we have arrived at the situation at which sisterly Egypt arrived years ago. Therefore, there is credibility and the atmosphere is favorable, despite the attempts by numerous quarters to spoil what has been achieved.

Regarding the others, I have no right to criticize or interfere, but I would like to ask: Has all that is in the Oslo agreement been implemented?

[Nafi'] There has been renewed talk about the Jordanian option. What is this option? On what specifically is it built?

[Husayn] The Jordanian option is for Jordan with its entire population to maintain its national unity and for the children of this country to continue building their country until a time comes when everybody will decide whether he has any other option. Then, everybody can make his own decision and sign with whomever they want to sign. As for the Jordanian option in the sense that the issue be resolved at the expense of Jordan, this is rejected. The issue is one of Palestinian rights over the national Palestinian soil.

[Nafi'] There has been a lot of talk about a Middle East market. A meeting was held in Casablanca and another meeting will be held in Amman. What are the joint steps that can be taken within the framework of this market. What is your vision of the objective behind its establishment. Will that cancel the role of the Arab League?

[Husayn] The Arab League is dear to us. It is our league. Our hope is for the Arabs to work together to enable it to arrive at a position which would enable it to play its role on Arab and regional levels.

Had we awaited the Arab League to achieve progress in the Middle East, that would not have been possible. It is known that we have repeatedly tried through the Arab League, but none of the agreements has been implemented.

I believe that we should review the issue of the Arab League until it reaches the required standard.

Regarding the Casablanca conference and the big headlines which accompanied the call for a Middle East market, the Amman conference will focus on specific issues and on what will be done in the future with the participation of the whole world on a larger scale.

[Nafi'] Your Majesty, would you give me a satisfactory answer to an old and new question: How can we achieve Arab reconciliation? Why has this reconciliation been obstructed since the Gulf war?

[Husayn] All issues which were related to the Gulf crisis should have been resolved within the framework of the Arab League and Arab community and we should have avoided any differences. I did not support the occupation of Kuwait, the aggression against it, or its annexation. I had reviewed this subject with you. What we feared in terms of effects did happen. We can see this in the current Arab situation. This is what we feared, but it happened. However, we can learn from what happened in the past. The most important thing is to concentrate on reviving inter-Arab relations. We are ready, and we hope that all will have the same readiness to restore these relations. Our relations with sisterly Egypt before 1990, achieved a great deal for us, for Egypt, and for our Arab nation. Now, praise be to God, we are opening a new chapter and we want it to have the same warmth which existed in the past. We want our relations to be based on mutual respect, absolute confidence, and strong cooperation. God willing, our future hopes are great.

[Nafi'] Is there a magic force to save the current situation and to achieve reconciliation?

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[Husayn] Sir, we will continue the attempts. I believe that all the circumstances will force us to concentrate on cooperation and achieve integration. The question is whether we are up to the level of responsibility. God willing, time will prove that we can meet the level of the responsibility.

[Nafi'] Egyptian-Jordanian relations are entering a new phase. Your Majesty, what are the methods to strengthen these relations?

[Husayn] Relations will continue to move ahead through direct contacts, cooperation, and consultations for the wellbeing of both countries and the Arabs.

[Nafi'] What is your opinion regarding President Mubarak's initiative to rid the region of mass destruction weapons, and how do you view Egypt's stand calling on Israel to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty?

[Husayn] In fact, I understand the circumstances of our brothers in Egypt. I believe this issue should receive extreme interest. Even the Jordanian-Israeli treaty notes this issue—namely, conventional and nonconventional mass destruction weapons. However, I believe that all efforts must be geared toward defining the features of this region and demanding everybody's commitment to free the region from these weapons and not to use them.

Source Clarifies King's Remarks

JN2002095895 Amman AL-ASWAQ in Arabic 20 Feb 95 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman, PETRA—A responsible source at the Royal Hashemite Court has explained that in His Majesty King Husayn's reference to Jerusalem in the interview he gave to Ibrahim Nafi' published in AL-AHRAM and AL-DUSTUR yesterday, the king meant that the Arab part of Jerusalem was one of his majesty's responsibilities when Jordan was responsible for Jerusalem. As for Jordan's current stand on Jerusalem, it is known to all.

'Text' of King Husayn AL-HAYAH Interview

JN2002090895 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic 20 Feb 95 p 18

["Text" of interview with King Husayn by AL-HAYAH chief editor Jihad al-Khazin; place and date not given—to be published in AL-HAYAH 20 February issue]

[FBIS Translated Text] [al-Khazin] Following the conclusion of the peace treaty with Israel and the start of implementing its provisions, what in your opinion are the most important obstacles to normalization of relations between the two countries on the popular level?

[Husayn] We do not believe that there are obstacles that cannot be overcome with time. Some of us might have opinions on normalization that have to do with personal feelings. I believe that the great majority of the people realize that there has to be progress on what was agreed upon as a basis for changing the people's way of life in terms of responding to their needs in the forthcoming stage. This can only come through working in this new atmosphere on the basis of two aspects: The first is a sense of security in the present and the future, something that was missing in the past. The second is that many opportunities have been made available by the new circumstances. We have regained our land and water and now we have recognized international borders. I believe some time will pass before expectations for a fast change materialize because most of these expectations have to do with big projects. An economic conference was held in Casablanca and another will be held in Amman this year. I believe it will be possible to highlight certain projects and things would consequently move in the right direction.

[Al-Khazin] In your opinion, will the foundering Palestinian- Israeli settlement affect the implementation of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty and the development of bilateral relations?

[Husayn] I have said and will reiterate our eagerness to have the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty be just a corner in the big building, the building of a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in the whole area. We hope that work will continue on the other tracks to achieve such a peace.

[Al-Khazin] It seems that Israel has not fulfilled all of its commitments to the Palestinian side under the Declaration of Principles for security reasons as Israel says. Does Jordan fear that Israel might evade some of its commitments to Jordan?

[Husayn] With respect to the commitments to Jordan, everything that has been agreed upon, so far, has been implemented. The withdrawal from the land. The question of water is on its way. Everything is proceeding in accordance with what was agreed upon with respect to all the other aspects and the topics in the working agenda and the arduous and dificult negotiations. We had insisted that no peace treaty be signed before completing negotiations on these topics.

As an observer, I have a remark to make on the Oslo agreement, which is revolving in a vicious circle, if we are to reach a solution: For example, it seemed to me that when they agreed that the five-year period would be the period when steps would be taken to tackle the major problems, what they wanted was to have a different atmosphere than the one we have at this stage in terms of security, stability, and giving the people a feeling that there is a new situation that will make them attain the desired results. This has not materialized as planned, and now to talk about immediately initiating the tackling of the big issues, the final status negotiations, is something we will watch with concern to see how things will proceed toward the desired solution. At the same time, I repeat that we in Jordan are ready to support our brothers with all we have once we understand what they want us to offer. I believe that the new Jordanian-Israeli situation could support the Palestinian-Israeli track and any Arab-Israeli track. We could offer support and

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assistance in the future if the brothers need this help, but we will not impose ourselves. We will only respond to any call on any topic.

[Al-Khazin] Regarding what you have said about direct engagement in final status negotiations to break the current logjam, do you support this course and are you ready, within this context, to deal with the idea of establishing a confederation or unity with the Palestinian entity?

[Husayn] Never. Personally, I will absolutely not deal with any of these ideas before our Palestinian brothers and kinsfolk have restored their rights on their national soil in an atmosphere of absolute freedom and before they have decided to launch a dialogue to discuss the shape or formula they wish to have. This cannot be done in advance. I maintain a stringent position on this issue just as was my position in talks with Israel, that we would not sign a peace treaty and then start the negotiating process. We negotiate and if we reach agreement on all points, we will sign the peace treaty. Here, the issue concerns our kinsfolk, brothers, and the nearest people to us. We are the nearest to them. However, we are sick of doubts, skepticism, and the atmosphere we have been through. This cannot be done unless they have reached such a position on their land in which they can exercise their rights and express themselves freely. Then, everything will be possible.

[Al-Khazin] Do you agree that the common and intertwined Jordanian-Palestinian interests require further institutional coordination and maybe a Jordanian partnership with the Palestinians upon discussing the final status of the occupied territories and Palestinian citizens?

[Husayn] We welcome this. We have always called for coordination and not differences. The Arab Palestinian people on the Palestinian national soil are our kinsmen and brothers. We will deal with and support them with our utmost energies and capabilities.

[Al-Khazin] But, does Jordan accept to be a partner with Palestinians in the final-status talks?

[Husayn] Never.

[Al-Khazin] Obviously, the Jordanian-Israeli peace is warmer than peace between Egypt and Israel. How would you account for this phenomenon?

[Husayn] I think it is difficult for an individual to determine the characteristics of the Egyptian-Israeli relationship and to judge whether it is warm. However, as far as we are concerned, the situation is totally different, be this due to land, geographical proximity, scores of issues and dimensions, and for our desire to give our Jordanian people the opportunity to realize their ambitions, goals, and aspirations. There is a future, security, and stability that would provide all opportunities for Jordanians to achieve their goals.

There is a peace treaty which we signed. We are committed to this treaty and we will implement it with all its details. We hope that it will bring good to all and we hope that it will be part of the comprehensive peace process in this region.

[Al-Khazin] What do you think of the Alexandria summit?

[Husayn] I do not have any objection to any Arab summit. On the contrary, we welcome it.

[Al-Khazin] And the Cairo summit?

[Husayn] It was held at the a kind invitation of His Excellency brother President Mubarak. It was my pleasure to attend. I think it gave the impression that the atmosphere, thank God, was as we wished for ourselves and for them. God willing, relations in the future will be as good as they used to be in the past.

[Al-Khazin] It seems that there is a big difference between Egypt and Israel on renewing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT] in April. What is your opinion?

[Husayn] I believe that the elimination of mass destruction weapons, conventional and nonconventional, and the prevention of their development in this region is fundamental. It is our hope that agreement will be reached on eliminating these weapons in the entire region and on identifying the features of the region. The question is not only restricted to Egypt and Israel. God Willing, we will reach such a comforting situation in which these weapons and their dangers would be removed.

Whether Jordan will sign the NPT or not is not related to the attitudes of Egypt and Israel. Our position has nothing to do with any other position. Our position is a principled one: We call for the elimination of these weapons and commitment to this by all parties in this region.

[Al-Khazin] The Syrian-Israeli negotiations are deadlocked, and the Syrians are claiming that Jordan moved too fast toward normalization with Israel. There was also newspaper criticism. What is Jordan's position with regard to such criticism?

[Husayn] During my last meeting with Syrian President al-Asad, I did not hide anything from him. Things were stable. I told him that Syria can afford to move slower than us. I also told him that if conditions are right, we will move toward peace and that we support a comprehensive solution. We continue to call for a comprehensive solution. My relationship with President al-Asad goes back a long time. He is a brother and a friend. I believe that he will be fair in his positions, God willing. As for the accusations against Jordan, there are many, and there is nothing new in that. We have become used to such accusations from time to time. However, we hope that Arab relations will not be governed by such considerations and that we will not reach that level in

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making accusations. It is very easy to level accusations of treason and agentry and then totally reverse them overnight. Our brothers in Egypt offered many sacrifices and led the nation through battles and they chose to follow the road to peace. All parties concerned as well as Israel proceeded from the same point in Madrid. Through world support, we provided an umbrella for our Palestinian brothers to enable them to move and have their say about their future and fate. We held talks on the agenda of the Jordanian-Israeli negotiations. We suspended the signing of this agenda until we were surprised to see that the Palestinian brothers and the Israelis have reached the Oslo accord. Therefore, we signed the agenda, then we began the arduous negotiating process that led to the results we have achieved. However, I will discuss this issue from another aspect. There are those who believe that Jordan should be the last to handle any issue. In fact, Jordan has tolerated a lot and has always been in the forefront. Jordan offered what nobody can deny even if it had been the last in line. In the absence of coordination, which, unfortunately, never existed in its required form, Jordan managed to solve everyone's issues and problems. Who would have worried about Jordan? What would have been Jordan's fate in relation to the Arab-Israeli formula? I do not see any justification for this. The human being lives with his own conscience and with his God, and meets his approval, in which case his conscience will be clear. We are working for the future, hoping that people will have good memories of us. Jordan is a democratic country. The peace march was agreed upon before it began and peace is the objective and desire of the great majority of people.

[Al-Khazin] You have proposed the idea of granting Palestinians residing in Arab countries the nationalities of these countries without relinquishing their right to their Palestinian identity or their right to repatriation and compensation. What is your perception of a final solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees and displaced people in Jordan and the Arab region?

[Husayn] There are two parts to the answer. The first deals with the displaced people. There is an arrangement for a mechanism to deal with this issue through a Palestinian-Jordanian-Egyptian- Israeli committee. Then there is the broader issue of refugees. The solution is linked to international legitimacy and to the right to compensation and repatriation. Moreover, the solution to this issue is linked to a decision by the United Nations. Until something crystallizes, we, in Jordan, regardless of our origins, are, frankly, one family and will remain as such. We will maintain national unity. Everyone enjoys the same rights and is performing the same duties. However, if anyone chooses a different situation at any stage, then he is welcome to do so.

[Al-Khazin] Do you feel that Jordan has overcome the crisis in its relations with the Gulf states due to its position during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait? Where do these relations stand nowadays?

[Husayn] Praise be to God, the relations are much better than they were before and they are moving in the right direction. We hope that they will regain their warmth and will be restored to their previous level.

[Al-Khazin] Does Jordan feel more secure after signing the peace treaty with Israel or are there still threats that justify Jordan's efforts to modernize and develop its Armed Forces?

[Husayn] Jordan needs to modernize and develop its Armed Forces so that it can protect itself, its democracy, and its regime. It also needs to do so so it can perform its duty in this region if it is needed on the regional level as well as its duty as the fifth country in the world in terms of the size of its participation in UN peacekeeping missions and as the second country in terms of the size of its contingent serving in former Yugoslavia with the UN peacekeeping forces. Jordan is continuously being asked to take part in similar operations in the future. This is attributed to the fact that the Jordanian soldier is a professional soldier who is performing his duty and is gaining a great deal of good reputation for us and for the Arabs as a whole.

[Al-Khazin] You talked about your Armed Forces' future regional tasks outside the kingdom's border. How would you describe those tasks and their nature against the backdrop of the trend toward a comprehensive peaceful solution in the region?

[Husayn] Jordan has for years played a major role in training a large number of cadres for sisterly Arab armies. It had the honor of fulfilling its duty toward its brethren when it was asked during the first Kuwaiti crisis [in the sixties] and in sisterly Oman. Therefore, there is a role. We are still speaking of one nation. We cannot forget this at all. But the important thing is that Jordan will not be a force that will threaten anybody. The basic thing is that Jordan has the right to exercise its right to self- defense.

[Al-Khazin] Is Jordan still calling for the formation of an Arab deterrent force from Arab League member states? What are the most important threats to the Arab region?

[Husayn] Threats are numerous. But as for the call you have mentioned, we froze it a long time ago. We proposed an Arab legion. I do not believe our proposal was inappropriate. One day we might adopt the idea again.

[Al-Khazin] Do you believe that Iraq should participate in the peace settlement to ensure its comprehensiveness? To what extent is Jordan prepared to play a role in this regard?

[Husayn] Iraq must be part of this region and part of its Arab nation. My concern and pain is for the Iraqi people and their suffering. Nothing more, nothing less. But sooner or later, Iraq must once again become part of this region. The suffering of the Iraqi people—I repeat the Iraqi people—must end.

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[Al-Khazin] The Arab leaders whom I interviewed in the past four months—your majesty, King Hassan, President Mubarak, and Gulf leaders—speak of the need to end the suffering of the Iraqi people. But what is practically taking place to end their suffering. Are there contacts with the United Nations or contacts to convince the Americans to ease their objection, for example?

[Husayn] What I say to you and say to all officials in this world is that this situation must not last.

[Al-Khazin] Do you expect the sanctions to be lifted this year?

[Husayn] I have no idea. Hopefully, there will be a thaw. That would at least have positive implications for the Iraqi people.

[Al-Khazin] Do you believe that the peace process is irreversible?

[Husayn] We hope so.

[Al-Khazin] Will Jordan be committed to the peace treaty with Israel and all its articles regardless of the extent of the Israeli commitment?

[Husayn] I believe that the entire orientation is for peace, regardless of the brethren's views toward the timing, formula, or method. Hopefully, everyone is serious in this regard.

[Al-Khazin] What is your stand on the policy of dual containment of Iraq and Iran?

[Husayn] We have nothing to do with it.

[Al-Khazin] Do you feel that it may lead to the opposite results from those expected from it?

[Husayn] This is possible. Practically speaking, this is a strange theory.

[Al-Khazin] Some believe that restoring Jordanian-Syrian relations to normal requires Jordan to freeze its treaty with Israel?

[Husayn] Let us view the matter from a different angle. Had they [the Syrians] moved first, no one would have listened to us had we objected, no matter what we say or do. No, we are not willing to delay the implementation of the treaty. We will implement what we committed ourselves to. There is no doubt about the inevitability of the continuation of the peace process on the other tracks, including the Syrian-Israeli track.

[Al-Khazin] Your Majesty, you phoned President al-Asad some time ago to console him on the first anniversary of the death of his son, Basil. Did you talk about bilateral relations?

[Husayn] Not at all. It was a fraternal conversation on an emotional occasion for him and for myself. I was affected by the affliction of my brother and his family. It was as if it was a personal loss for me.

[Al-Khazin] The Syrian view is that the Jordanian-Israeli treaty has weakened the Syrian negotiating position with Israel? What is your majesty's opinion?

[Husayn] Once again I say that Jordan is not a card in anybody's hand. It never was and will never be. Regarding the peace process, Jordan moved along this path, preceded by others. We and our brothers began from the same point and we hope this march will continue. It is unacceptable that anyone forces us to adjust our policies and situation in this country in accordance with what suits him. Such was the case with Israel when it insisted that we sign a peace treaty before completing the negotiations and we rejected that. This is our position vis-a-vis any side that thinks of Jordan as a follower and not a sisterly state. We should act on the basis of balanced relations when we talk about the Arab world and Arab relations so that we can achieve our goals.

[Al-Khazin] The Jordanian-Israeli treaty has not then weakened the Syrian position?

[Husayn] I do not see why the peace treaty with Israel should weaken the Syrian negotiating position in any way. On the contrary, it could be a precedent for moving in the right direction.

[Al-Khazin] There are Arab differences over the Iranian role in the region. What is the mechanism for forming a common Arab position toward Iran?

[Husayn] Regrettably, such a mechanism does not exist. For example, all the Arabs have played a role in paralyzing the Arab League and hindering its ability to perform its duties. They have also weakened the Arab summit institution, which we hope will be reactivated. Our relations with Iran are good and based on mutual respect. We have no problem. We were careful that relations are developed on the basis of understanding on the highest levels that would define the red and green lines. Relations are normal at this stage.

There are many problems in this region that need to be tackled. If we the Arabs have better relations, especially at the highest levels of responsibility, I believe the situation will be much better.

[Al-Khazin] Israel fears that Jordanian rapprochement with some Arab states will be at the expense of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. What is your opinion?

[Husayn] No. Jordan is part of this nation. It was with it in all its battles. Jordan made sacrifices for the Arab nation and will continue to do so. It is strange that some have the impression that the peace process means that Jordan has separated from its nation.

'Senior' Source Critical of Peace Process

MS2102142895 Dublin THE IRISH TIMES in English 20 Feb 95 p 9

[Report by Michael Jansen: "Peace Process Damages Democracy"]

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[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman—The PLO chairman, Mr Yasir 'Arafat, and the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr Shimon Peres, met in Paris at the weekend but, once again, failed to achieve agreement on the extension of Palestinian self-rule to the West Bank. This failure, after the failure of the summit last Thursday between Mr 'Arafat and the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Yitzaq Rabin, has made it all the more difficult for Jordan's King Husayn to accelerate the normalisation of relations with the Jewish state following Israel's military withdrawal from 380 square kilometres of occupied Jordanian territory.

Visits to Amman by Knesset members and other Israeli and American Jewish delegations, all urging the king to speed up the process of establishing a range of economic, political and trade relationships with Israel, have been met by angry criticism from Islamist and left-wing opponents of the peace process, warnings of catastrophe from legislators and widespread popular hostility. Last week Jordan's Bar Association joined 11 professional associations representing 80,000 doctors, nurses, dentists, engineers and others to reject normalisation. Mr Ahmad 'Ubaydat, a former head of internal security, was last month expelled from the court-appointed Senate for opposing the king's peace policy.

The main reason for hostility was defined by a Jordanian commentator who previously supported the peace process. "The withdrawal is a joke. What does it amount to, a few hundred acres that no one knew were occupied in the first place? All these years we weren't fighting for those unknown acres. We were fighting for Palestine and unless the Israelis withdraw from the West Bank and Jerusalem there can be no real settlement. Without peace in Palestine, there can be no peace with the rest of the Arabs."

A senior political figure agreed: "All Jordanians want peace; but we should have stopped at signing a non-belligerency agreement... After all, an end to 46 years of war is a great advance. Then we could have gone on negotiating until we had achieved a comprehensive agreement involving all the Arab parties."

He and other members of the Jordanian political establishment have five criticisms of the way the peace process has developed on the Jordanian track: "First our land was not returned to us. We have sovereignty but in practice nothing has really changed. The Israelis continue to farm it. Jordanians can't even visit this land. Second, the treaty forces us to establish relations in all aspects of life.

"Third, we are too far ahead of the others involved in the peace process, the Palestinians and the Syrians. Fourth, we did not get our fair share of water while the Israelis got more than their fair share. And finally, Jordan has now become a model"—instead of the Israel-Egypt treaty which returned all Egyptian territory occupied in 1967.

He said the recently formed government of Sharif Zayid Ben Shakir would try to "slow the process of normalisation".

This source told The Irish Times: "Jordan's democratistion process is dead" and "all the gains the country made since 1989" when Jordan held its first free general election, "have been lost" because the palace has assumed total control of peacemaking.

By reversing the process of democratisation to pursue an unpopular policy line, King Hussein has, according to several informants, lost the trust of a majority of Jordanians, and placed the Hashemite dynasty at risk.

The success of the peace process on the Jordanian track has isolated King Hussein as much as its failure on the Palestinian track has left Mr 'Arafat vulnerable. And for the same reason: the king asserted absolute rule sidelining parliament, while Mr 'Arafat became an autocrat and marginalised the consultative structures of the PLO.

Mr Shafiq al-Hut, a member of the 18-member executive committee, the PLO's cabinet, said: "The PLO no longer exists" as an effective body.

Dr As'ad 'Abd-al-Rahman, an influential member of the PLO's 90- member central council, said the Arabs had no choice because "we were defeated and are now recognising our defeat. We're not signing peace treaties but surrenders. Now all we Arabs—Egypt, Jordan, even Syria—have self-rule like the Palestinians, not independence or sovereignty."

Israeli Agricultural, Industrial Delegations Arrive

JN2102085095 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic 21 Feb 95 pp 1, 21

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman—AL-DUSTUR, agencies—Two Israeli technical delegations arrived in Amman yesterday. The first is an agricultural delegation, which comprises 180 members and is led by Walid Sadiq, Israeli deputy minister of agriculture.

The Israeli official told reporters that the delegation will meet with Jordanian officials to discuss the prospects of agricultural cooperation as stipulated in the peace treaty.

Moreover, an Israeli industrial delegation arrived in Amman to discuss the prospects of cooperation in the field of marketing advanced industries.

The delegation includes representatives of a number of companies dealing with advanced electronic industries in Israel. The delegation will seek to market electronic products in Jordan and other Arab countries.

Later yesterday, the Qatari News Agency said that Dr. Hani al-Mulqi, head of the Royal Scientific Society, met with a delegation representing Israeli advanced technological industries.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed cooperation in the fields of electronics and technology and their applications in the field of precision industries.

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They also exchanged ideas on a mechanism for cooperation after the two countries sign an economic agreement on 10 May.

'Detailed' Trade Accord Reached With Palestinian Authority

JN1802103995 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 18 Feb 95 p 3

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman—Jordan and the Palestine National Authority (PNA) have reached a detailed agreement on trade, as called for in the accord signed by the Kingdom and the PNA in January, clearing the way for direct trade and setting out items that would enjoy preferential treatment from the two sides.

It was the first Jordan-PNA agreement reached after the signing of the broader agreement and six other sectoral accords on Jan. 26 by Prime Minister al-Sharif Zayd Bin-Shakir and PNA President Yasir 'Arafat.

The accord replaces all effective agreements that guided Palestinian products through the Kingdom since 1967.

More significantly, it opens the door for Jordanian exports, albeit limited, to the Palestinian market for the first time since 1967.

The trade agreement, drawn in three days of talks between a PNA team headed by economic and trade expert Samir Hulaylah and Jordanian officials led by Ministry of Inudstry and Trade Assistant Under-Secretary Shawki Haddadin, now awaits final endorsement by the Jordanian government and the PNA cabinet based in Gaza.

The accord covers the Palestinian autonomous territories of Gaza and Jericho as well as the rest of the West Bank where the PNA hopes to expand its self-rule in negotiations with Israel.

The PNA team left Amman on Friday. The trade accord is expected to be placed before the PNA cabinet during its regular weekly meeting on Saturday and, given the urgency to launch direct trade, Mr. 'Arafat is expected to give his endorsement soon to the agreement.

No details were immediately available on the goods that the agreement covers, but, in principle, officials said, more than 100 industrial products are included in a list of goods for preferential treatment.

These goods will enjoy complete duty-free status, but local sales tax will be applied on them.

Another agreement that streamlined agricultural trade between the two sides is expected to take effect immediately.

This accord was sorted out in talks between Minister of Agriculture Mansur Bin-Tarif and 'Azzam Tubaylah, under-secretary of agriculture in the PNA.

Further talks will be held between the two sides to work out the mechanisms to guide export-import operations.

Jordan will continue to allow the transit of Palestinian produce through the Kingdom's territory but the Palestinian authority will issue its own certificates of origin instead of a Jordanian one used since 1967, Reuter reported.

It was not immediately clear whether the trade accord set any ceiling for imports and exports between the Kingdom and the Palestinian territories. Jordan had been aiming at a ceiling-free accord and the Palestinians have been arguing that they could not accept such an arrangement because of their limited import volume that they also want to use while negotiating trade accords with other parties.

Furthermore, an economic accord signed by the PNA and Israel in April binds the Palestinians into arrangements that do not permit free trade with Jordan, they say. The list of items drawn up on Thursday includes the items that Israel would permit the PNA to import from Jordan under the April agreement.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hulaylah was quoted as saying that the list of duty-products would speed up deals between the private sectors of the two sides.

Minister of Trade 'Ali Abu-al-Raghib told Reuter that final touches to the agreement would be put during a meeting with Palestinian Economy Minister Ahmad Quray' in late February.

According to Reuter, the goods were defined as complementary and non-competitive—meaning that none of the products given preferential treatment will pose a threat to the local products.

Jordanian officials have said that the Israel-PNA economic agreement, under which Israel effectively maintained its role as the dominant market power in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, restricted the scope of Jordanian-Palestinian trade.

The Israel-PNA agreement is very detailed and specifically lists items that the self-rule authority could import from Jordan and excludes many products that Jordanian businessmen say they could sell to the Palestinians.

The Israeli agreement is that the Jewish state cannot allow such products to enter the Palestinian territories with whom it has a free-trade accord since the products could easily end up in the Israeli market itself.

PNA officials argue that it was a price that the Palestinians had to pay Israel in return for the Jewish state's agreement to accept the establishment of a Palestinian monetary authority and currency.

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Fadlallah: U.S. Declared 'World War' on Islam

NC1802194995 Beirut AL-NAHAR in Arabic 9 Feb 95 p 6

[FBIS Translated Text] 'Allamah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah has stated that the United States has declared a "world war on the kind of Islam that is open about human issues." He indicated that a [Middle East] solution is frozen until a new U.S. President is elected.

Commenting on al-Azhar Shaykh Jad-al-Haq 'Ali Jad-al-Haq's stance on Hizballah, Fadlallah said that, from the Egyptian Government's point of view, the al-Azhar shaykh has not changed his stance on Israel, because he previously referred to the need for the Jews to withdraw from the territories they occupied in 1967. So he accepts the legitimacy of the State of Israel in the areas the Jews occupied in 1948.

Fadlallah said: We see nothing new in his remarks except that in his talk about the Islamic Resistance he said things that even the media did not say. He said the Islamic Resistance is a terrorist movement that must be fought. Naturally, an Islamic spokesman of his posture should not have fallen into the trap of considering the resistance of the Islamists in Lebanon and Palestine illegitimate.

He added: We still reject his talk about the legitimacy of conciliation [sulh] with Israel in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1948. But in bad times when everyone is singing the praises of Israel, any protest by a personality is considered positive.

Asked about his expectations that the negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks would not achieve results before the U.S. and Israeli elections, Fadlallah said: In my opinion, when it comes to the problem of the negotiations, which we ask God to always complicate, there are internal problems in Jewish society in occupied Palestine. There is a feud between the Labor Party and the Likud and one-upmanship on the issue of full withdrawal from the Golan and other issues. At the same time we see that Syria will accept nothing less than Israel's withdrawal from every inch of the Golan and south Lebanon. The two stances [of Syria and Israel] are still complicated under the pressure of the political circumstances surrounding them.

If we look elsewhere we see that the U.S. President has become weak. He is rushing to achieve a settlement by putting pressure on the Arab side in favor of the Israeli side. The political situation in the United States has changed following the success of the Republican Party, which is obstructing the U.S. President's efforts to achieve the so-called peace during his era. We know that the weakness of the U.S. President and the complications created by Israel to prevent a settlement will push all the sides to freeze the issue until a new U.S. President comes along. Because you cannot offer a concession or a service to a setting sun; it must be a rising sun. Judging from the circumstances I believe the issue of a settlement will take a long time unless extraordinary conditions occur that might necessitate accelerating the settlement.

On the U.S. defense secretary's warning to the Mediterranean basin countries against fundamentalism and its dangers for the settlement process, Fadlallah said: The United States has declared war on Islam under the title of "war on fundamentalism." By fundamentalism, extremism, and terrorism, the United States means the Islamic movements that are working to liberate Islamic land, liberate the Islamic man, liberate Islamic political decisionmaking, and liberate Islamic wealth from the grip of arrogant thieves. They consider that Islam, which calls on its followers to work for freedom and justice, is a danger to U.S. interests. So the United States is mobilizing the world, including NATO, against Islam and against these Islamic movements on the pretext that they reject peace in the Middle East, practice terrorism in this region, and stir up chaos.

Fadlallah concluded: We say that the United States has declared a world war on Islam, which is open on human issues. It supports the kind of Islam that praises and glorifies the arrogant powers and does not want the kind of Islam that praises and glorifies God. We the Muslims, who are open on the issues of freedom and justice, must form one front and Islamic political unity if we cannot form Islamic religious unity. The U.S. enemy wants the head of Islam, not the head of the Sunnis or Shiites. This is what we see in its diverse campaigns against the Islamic movements in both the Shiite and Sunni countries. The Americans and all the arrogant ones do not want Islam, which opposes, confronts, and calls for freedom and justice.

Fadlallah: U.S. Manipulating Arabs To Prevent Unity

NC1902194395 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Arabic 1730 GMT 19 Feb 95

[Telephone interview with Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, in Beirut, by unidentified correspondent, in Tehran, "a short while ago"; from the "News and Reports" feature—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Correspondent] Sayyid, the Arab situation is entering a phase of deterioration and division. In your view, what are the reasons for this deterioration and how can one deal with it in order to overcome it?

[Fadlallah] We notice that the United States wields deep influence on Arab policy. This influence is distributed over many Arab countries and acts to prevent the Arabs from uniting. Such Arab unity or solidarity could bolster the Arab states against yielding to American pressures on the settlement issue and could prevent the negative results from affecting the general Arab situation. Therefore, I believe that the United States is applying pressure in any way it can in order to prevent the Arabs from becoming strong anywhere. What the United States wants now is for the Arabs to remain weak so that they will make concessions to Israel at the expense of peace in order to establish an Israeli-American peace, not an Arab peace. Therefore, I do not expect any decisive or important initiatives to restore Arab solidarity.

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[Correspondent] We notice Zionist military escalation throughout southern Lebanon. There is also the issue of the fishermen, where the Zionist forces have started pressuring them. What is your reading of this issue?

[Fadlallah] It is natural, since Lebanon is the only Arab country that is in a position for tough confrontation with the Israelis, causing them grievous losses. The Islamic Resistance in Lebanon is in the trenches of confrontation as a result of its advanced security, political, and military experiences, which are so great they confuse the enemy in many ways. At some stages, they have even succeeded in confusing the political situation inside occupied Palestine. Therefore, the growing Islamic Resistance operations and the victories they have scored make the Israeli enemy take fierce and indiscriminate actions to coerce the civilians. Other examples are the siege they have clamped on fishermen in Sidon, their shelling of civilians, and other measures they take to raise the morale of their agents in the South Lebanese Army. They also take these measures to raise the morale of their own army, which has suffered many losses under the blows of the resistance.

We believe that the Lebanese arena is one of open war between the Islamic Resistance and Israel; therefore, it never comes as a surprise to us when the shelling and confrontation are escalated.

[Correspondent] Thank you 'Allamah Fadlallah.

Fadlallah Sermon Assails U.S. Support for Israel

LD1702210895 Tehran IRNA in English 1932 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Beirut, Feb. 17, IRNA—Prominent Lebanese alim Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah said today that the U.S. support to maintain the balance of power in the Zionist's regime's favour is intended to deprive the Arabs of all dignity they possess. In his Friday prayer sermons at the Imam Reza Mosque in the southern suburbs of the Lebanese capital, Fadlallah referred to the futility of the compromise deals with the Zionist regime and said the obstructions by the Zionist in putting into practice the articles of the Gaza-Jericho compromise show that Israel will not give any advantage to the Palestinians.

Referring to the anniversary of the massacre of fasting Palestinian worshippers at the shrine of prophet Abraham in al-Khalil [Hebron] town, he said the U.S. and its supporters do not take responsibility for the crime, but when Palestinian combatants make martyrdom-seeking operations against the Zionists, President Bill Clinton sends messages to world leaders including Arab heads not to support the Palestinian combatants.

Fadlallah also focused on the obstinacy of the Zionist regime in refusing to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the dispute between Cairo and Tel Aviv in this regard, and said now Egypt has come to know the plans of the Zionist regime to remain the only state in the region with access to nuclear weapons as well as the U.S. support in this regard.

He turned to the big talk by some senior American officials of late on changing the Islamic system in Iran, and dismissed it as hallucinations. The allamah said the U.S. has engaged in an economic war to weaken the Islamic Republic of Iran and to sell more weapons to Iran's neighbours.

Arab League Chief Leaves, Rules Out Early Arab Summit

NC1802145095 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1130 GMT 18 Feb 95

[News conference by Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid with unidentified correspondents at Beirut airport prior to his departure on 18 February—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Correspondent] You have visited Lebanon and held a series of meetings and contacts with Lebanese officials. Can you sum up the visit?

['Abd-al-Majid] The purpose of my visit was to exchange views with Lebanese officials on the overall Arab situation and the current developments. I am happy with the results of these meetings, which were very useful and fruitful. We discussed the peace process and the need to maintain its momentum despite the problems being created by Israel. I believe my visit to Beirut and my preceding visit to Damascus have strengthened Syria's and Lebanon's stances on this process. There is cohesion between the two stances and a clear perception of the need to push forward the peace process. Peace is a strategic option. There are principled stands, such as the need to liberate the land in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace and establish normal relations in the region. [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] Is there a tendency to hold an Arab summit shortly?

['Abd-al-Majid] I do not believe the conditions are ripe yet for such a summit.

[Correspondent] What is the effect of Israel's inflexibility on the peace process in the region?

['Abd-al-Majid] Israel's inflexibility is the main obstacle. Israel must know that peace is not an act of charity for the Arabs. Just as it is beneficial to the Arabs, peace is also beneficial to Israel. [passage omitted]

Al-Hariri Cites Unified Arab Stance on NPT

NC1802072195 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 0415 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri has disclosed that Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid discussed with him the issue of the

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Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT]. He said it seems that all the Arabs insist that Israel sign this treaty before they do.

Israelis, 'Terrorists' Trade Gunfire in Sujud

NC1802092395 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 0800 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The terrorists resumed their attacks this morning. They pounded Sujud and its environs from their positions in Iqlim al-Tuffah. However, the terrorist attacks caused no casualties. The Israeli army and the South Lebanese Army silenced the sources of the terrorist fire.

Elsewhere, an Israeli army force monitored a terrorist group on the outskirts of Iqlim al-Tuffah last night. The Israeli forces fired several TOW missiles. There have been no immediate reports on the losses inflicted on the terrorists.

In another development, our correspondent has learned that the Israeli soldier who died of his wounds yesterday was injured when a land mine went off on a hill overlooking al-'Ayshiyah. According to our correspondent, the soldier was not killed by an explosive device.

Casualties Reported in Attack

NC1802134095 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1130 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The situation in the south remained tense today as a result of attacks by the occupation forces who shelled the Mlita hills, Jabal Safi, 'Ayn Bu Siwar, and the 'Arab Salim outskirts in Iqlim al-Tuffah this morning.

At approximately 1250 today Israeli combat aircraft overflew al-Nabatiyah and Iqlim al-Tuffah at a low altitude.

Earlier at 0615 today the occupation forces raked the al-Dabshah environs. Last night they fired several missiles on Mlita township.

Meanwhile the radio station of the militia collaborating with Israel reported that an Israeli soldier died today of wounds sustained yesterday when he stepped on a landmine near al-'Ayshiyah.

The resistance fighters launched a surprise attack on the enemy's Sujud position at 0830 today. They clashed with the personnel manning the position, destroyed most of the position's fortications and machine-gun redoubts, and killed or wounded most of troops inside the position.

At the same time a resistance support-fire unit directed an intensive bombardment against the position and its environs, inflicting further casualties on the enemy.

Travelers from the township of Yuhmur al-Shaqif reported today that last night the Israeli occupation forces blew up the transmission-reception pole belonging to the Tapline Company, which formerly supplied al-Zahrani fuel reservoirs with Saudi oil. They said that the explosion was so loud that it was heard in Yuhmur and 'Arnun.

'Violent Bombardment' of South Areas Reported

NC1902071595 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0530 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Muhammad Shaqqur, our correspondent in the south, has just reported that the situation has flared up in some areas since 0545 today.

The correspondent said that, starting at 0545 today, the Israeli occupation artillery began a concentrated and violent bombardment of the Iqlim al-Tuffah and al-Nabatiyah areas with all types of shells. Dozens of shells are falling on the villages and towns of al-Luwayzah, Mlita, Mlikh, Jabal Safi, Jarju', the outskirts of Habbush, al-Jabal al-Akhdar, al-Jabal al-Rafi', al-Wadi al-Akhdar, Kafr Rumman, al-Nabatiyah al-Fawqa, and Kafr Tibnit.

The resistance fighters are confronting the enemy forces. They have been launching attacks since 0540 on the occupation forces' positions in Sujud, Bi'r Kallab, al-Suwayda', and al-Tuhrah. The clashes and the frenzied bombardment were still continuing at 0630.

The enemy radio had admitted that one Israeli soldier was killed and another wounded when a device exploded near an Israeli patrol on a road in the eastern sector of southern Lebanon.

In another urgent report we just received, the NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY correspondent in the south reported that the enemy has expanded its attacks and is now shelling Habbush in a concentrated and fierce way and this shelling is being accompanied by 12.7-mm machine-gun fire. The al-Sitt Zubaydah Bridge that connects Iqlim al-Tuffah with al-Nabatiyah is also coming under Israeli artillery shelling and 12.7-mm machine-gun fire. The enemy's shelling of the Iqlim al-Tuffah and al-Nabatiyah areas is still continuing while the resistance men are waging honorable confrontations with the occupation positions in al-Turrah, al-Dabshah, Sujud, and Bi'r Kallab.

The enemy meanwhile has brought in troops and armored vehicle enforcements to the al-Jarmaq, al-'Ayshiyah, al-Rayhan, 'Aramta axis, but there is yet no change in the deployment of the occupation forces' military units in the occupied strip.

Another report we received only a few minutes ago said that the Israeli attacks are now concentrated on al-Nabatiyah, where some of its quarters are coming under violent bombardment. Security sources told us that the bombardment targeted the quarters of al-Maslakh, al-Rahibat, and the area of the deserted army barracks in al- Nabatiyah while Kafr Rumman is coming under barbaric Israeli shelling accompanied by machine-gun fire. The sources added that clouds of smoke are covering the targeted areas.

We have just received news that Habbush and 'Arab Salim are now coming under violent bombardment from the enemy's 120-mm artillery while Israeli helicopters are flying over Iqlim al-Tuffah and opening fire from their large-caliber machine guns on civilians. Kafr Jawz

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township is also coming under fierce artillery shelling, and the resistance positions are shelling the occupation forces' artillery to silence it.

Our correspondent in al-Nabatiyah, 'Afif Mahmudi, also has reported that fierce clashes have been raging between the resistance fighters and the al-Dabshah position garrison since 0545, in which rockets and machine guns are being used. Kafr Tibnit, al-Nabatiyah al-Fawqah, and the deserted army barracks in al-Nabatiyah are coming under violent bombardment from the enemy's artillery.

The Islamic resistance announced a short time ago that its fighters have been waging fierce battles with the enemy and his agents since 0500 and that violent clashes are taking place with the the positions of al-Hamra', al-Bayyadah, Hardun, Humayyid, Rshaf, Bayt Yahun, Haddathah, Bra'shit, Hula, al-Dabshah, al-Burj, 'Ali al-Tahir, Bi'r Kallab, and Sujud.

The Islamic resistance statement added that the resistance fighters succeeded in destroying the fortifications of the positions they attacked and that the enemy soldiers and their agents lost the initiative as a result of these lightning attacks.

Another report from our correspondent in al-Nabatiyah, Muhammad Shaqqur, said that Kafr Jawz in al-Nabatiyah District is still the target of a violent bombardment from 120-mm artillery and that the junction of Kafr Rumman-al-Nabatiyah is also coming under violent 120-mm artillery bombardment. The bombardment is now targeting the residential areas of Habbush. The Habbush-'Arab Salim main road is cut off as it is coming under shelling and sniper fire from the enemy positions and the al-Nabatiayh main road and the vicinity of the Red Cross are coming under mortar fire. Thick clouds are covering the area.

In the central sector, the enemy artillery is shelling the villages of Bra'shit, Haddathah, Kafra, Yatar, and Majdal Silm using 155-mm shells from positions inside the occupied security strip.

Security sources said a short time ago that around 20 GRAD rockets fell on the enemy forces and their agents positions inside the occupied security strip. The enemy's military sources have not confirmed this yet.

In a further report, our correspondent in al-Nabatiyah said that 'Arab Salim and the outskirts of Habbush are now coming under artillery shelling while the large-scale attack launched by the Islamic Resistance on the positions of al-Turrah, 'Ali al-Tahir, al-Dabshah, and al-Suwayda' is still continuing. Our correspondent added that an Israeli helicopter raked the al-Nab' al-Safi basin and al-Jabal al-Rafi' with machine-gun fire at 0430 today. At 0730, the heavy shelling extended to the hills of Iqlim al-Tuffah, especially Mlita, al-Luwayzah, Jarju', 'Arab Salim, the al-Nab' al-Safi basin, and al-Jabal al-Rafi'.

Israeli Planes Launch Second Raid

NC1902070195 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0642 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Ladies and gentlemen, our correspondent in al-Nabatiyah told us a short while ago that enemy aircraft raided the hills between Mlita and al-Luwayzah a few minutes ago. He said the Lebanese Army is confronting the raiding aircraft with antiaircraft fire to prevent them from realizing their objectives.

SLA Says Kafr Rumman Attacks Repulsed

NC1902083795 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 0800 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The South Lebanese Army [SLA] repulsed an attack launched by the terrorists against the Kafr Rumman position at around 0530 today. The terrorists used machine guns and rockets in their attack that was backed by an artillery bombardment originating from the areas of Kafr Rumman, Habbush, and al-Nabatiyah al-Fawqa. The SLA garrison in the position repulsed the attackers with the support of artillery, which targeted the positions around 'Arab Salim, Sujud, and al-Ghazlun in the eastern sector and the positions of Bra'shit, al-Bayyadah, the Hula-Rshaf crossing point, and Jabal Humayyid in the western sector.

One SLA soldier was martyred in these attacks.

The SLA and Israeli artillery shelled the terrorists' positions and the losses in the latter's ranks are not known yet.

A report just in says that the soldiers manning the 'Arab Salim position repulsed a short time ago an attack made by terrorists who used Sagger rockets and machine guns.

More Israeli Raids on South Reported

NC1902090595 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0851 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The enemy planes have staged new raids on the Iqlim al-Tuffah area, specifically on Mlita, al-Jabal al- Rafi', and al-Luwayzah. Here are the details from our correspondent 'Ali Badr-al-Din:

[Begin Badr-al-Din recording] Israeli warplanes staged a series of raids on the Iqlim al-Tuffah area, specifically on Tallat Mlita, al-Jabal al-Rafi', al-Luwayzah, and an area between Jba' and Buslayya between 1005 and 1040 today. The Israeli airplanes are continuing their sorties over the al-Nabatiyah and Iqlim al-Tuffah areas. This is 'Ali Badr-al-Din, the NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY office in al-Nabatiyah. [end recording]

Two Killed, 4 Wounded in Raids

NC1902120395 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1130 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Two citizens were martyred and four others were wounded in the Israeli land and air attacks that targeted a number of villages in the Iqlim al-Tuffah and

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al-Nabatiyah areas this morning. The attacks also caused heavy material losses. [passage omitted]

Israelis, Hizballah Inflict Casualties

NC1902195895 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1915 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The military escalation in the south today left five people dead, including two civilians in the village of Kafr Rumman, two Hizballah members, and one of Antoine Lahd's [South Lebanese Army, SLA] forces. Seven others were injured as a result of the Israeli bombardment.

In a statement released today, the Islamic Resistance said that groups of its fighters this morning launched a series of assaults against several Israeli and SLA positions near the occupied border strip in the western and central sectors, especially Rshaf, al-Bayyadah, Haddatha, al-Dabshah, al-Suwayda', and Sujud. The statement said that Hizballah fighters fired SAM-7 surface-to-air missiles at raiding Israeli military aircraft.

This morning the Israeli warplanes launched seven aid raids on Iqlim al-Tuffah hills, particularly 'Arab Salim and 'Ayn Bu Siwar.

Birri Calls For Arab League Meeting on Israeli Attacks

NC1902210695 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 2000 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Chamber of Deputies Speaker Nabih Birri has been following the developments in the situation in the south. Deputy 'Abd-al-Latif al-Zayn briefed him on the result of the barbaric bombardment of Kafr Rumman which left two people martyred and five injured.

Birri made the following statement on the arbitrary Israeli acts of aggression against the villages of south Lebanon:

[Announcer] It has become clear that Israel's pursuit of a programmed scheme of destruction and eviction of people in the south and the western al-Biqa' falls within their constant attempts to pressure Lebanon and Syria to soften their stances and lower their demands for a fair and comprehensive peace based on the UN resolutions. The crimes committed by the Israeli forces in Kafr Rumman and throughout the south today by military aircraft and ground forces are aimed at completing the naval blockade that has been imposed on the south coast for 10 days. This blockade is preventing hundreds of our kinfolk from making a living by fishing.

It has become clear that Israel froze the peace process on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks after it has failed to digest what has been achieved on the other tracks. It is no longer a secret that international efforts are currently focusing on preserving what has been achieved and not on advancing the peace process on the other tracks.

Within the same context, the Israeli conflagration in the south is intended to cover up the Israeli stance and divert attention from the Arab demands for supervision of the Israeli nuclear installations.

The Israeli aggression today came after Israel had massed large artillery and armored forces in the occupied Lebanese border area and after the Israeli agent [South Lebanese Army] armed cliques had collapsed. The Israeli land, naval, and aerial blockade of the south requires joint Arab efforts and resorting to the Arab League, not only to serve the interests of the south and Lebanon alone but also the common Arab interests so that the Arabs will not fall victims to Israel and be taken over one by one.

We have grown accustomed to the Arabs acting rapidly to organize meetings in times of disaster. It is high time that the Arabs met to ward off the Israeli danger and designs and to deal with the requirements for peace.

Buwayz Says Israeli Messages 'Not Good'

NC1902204895 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 2015 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz has pointed out that the Israeli messages we are getting from southern Lebanon are not good. They place before us some uncomfortable possibilities. He said Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin is mistaken if he believes that he can freeze the peace process and resume it whenever he wants.

Buwayz Warns Israel 'Missing Great Opportunity'

NC1802173195 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1630 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz has said that Israeli messages coming from the south, messages that are not peaceful, put us up against uncomfortable possibilities.

Speaking in a radio interview, Buwayz said that peace is currently frozen and that the potential repercussions of this might be grave.

He added that Lebanon deals with the peace process on the basis of established principles and according to the principle of full withdrawal for comprehensive peace. He remarked that the obstruction of that peace could sound the alarm on the regional and pan-Arab levels.

The foreign minister believes that Israel is missing a great opportunity that might not come again, because regional and Arab efforts might lessen later.

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Paper Says U.S. Credibility Facing 'Hard Test'

JN1802124095 Damascus SANA in Arabic 0815 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, 18 Feb (SANA)—The newspaper AL-THAWRAH has asserted that the peace process is now facing a crystal-clear stalemate. It is sometimes thought that the peace process is no longer a top U.S. priority and that peace, which was a pressing issue during the previous phase, is no longer so.

In an editorial by chief editor 'Amid Khuli today, the paper says: It appears that the U.S. Administration deals with the peace process as part of a seasonal ritual, which is either unjustified or incomprehensible.

AL-THAWRAH explains that the U.S. enthusiasm for the peace process is often linked to the internal circumstances in Israel, as if this issue is completely linked to what takes place in Israel. The United States manipulates the peace process according to Israel's interest away from strategic considerations. These considerations are supposed to steer the U.S. steps toward peace, because the United States is a cosponsor of the peace process and the party that launched the known peace initiative.

The paper points out that the peace process became stalled long ago, and that no one in the U.S. Administration has defined the party responsible for obstructing peace years ago. It wonders: What would the U.S. reaction be if the Arab parties or Syria had obstructed peace, set conditions, or refused to implement the international resolutions and the U.S. initiative? Would the United States be content with saying that it is a neutral and fair partner and leave the parties taking part in the peace process to hold dialogue with one another to find solutions by themselves?

AL-THAWRAH says that Syria has responded to many U.S. demands to expedite the peace process and prove to the United States that it sincerely and honestly wants Washington to succeed in achieving peace in the region.

The paper says that Syria is well aware of the importance of achieving peace according to the U.S. initiative, so bilateral relations can achieve distinguished and firm steps in the future, and this will certainly be in the interest of both countries. AL-THAWRAH explains that Syria responded to the U.S. desire to raise the level of dialogue, and that the level of military dialogue rose to the highest level required. This dialogue is bound to achieve a breakthrough regarding the withdrawal from the Golan and the necessary arrangements based on the objective requirements of the peace process in a way that will push it forward.

AL-THAWRAH adds that the United States is well aware of the Syrian position, of its sincere approach, and of the proposals it made to achieve a solution that will fulfill the U.S. initiative. Likewise, the United States is well aware of the Israeli position in the dialogue and also of the party responsible for halting the rounds of exchanging ideas and of the reasons behind this halt. However, the United States has stood idly by, and it now says that it is awaiting the resumption of talks at the level of ambassadors. We are not aware of anything new on which dialogue can begin, nor are we aware of the substance of such dialogue.

The paper asserts that if the United States does not have anything new to offer, such dialogues cannot be held. Moreover, if the United States is not truly concerned about its own initiative through promoting and steering the dialogue as appropriate and according to the requirements of the initiative, such meetings will not be objectively beneficial because they will turn into an objective in themselves.

Concluding its editorial, AL-THAWRAH urges the U.S. Administration to promote the peace process, fulfill its declared commitments regarding this process, and fulfill the pledges of President Clinton which he declared at the two summits held with President al-Asad in Geneva and Damascus. The paper says that U.S. credibility is now being put to a hard test and will crack if Israel succeeds in defying it.

Commentary Terms Oslo Accord 'Lifeless Child'

JN1902145595 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1230 GMT 19 Feb 95

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Dear listeners: If we count the bilateral meetings 'Arafat held with Rabin and Peres, the secret and public meetings held by both sides' delegations at the Erez checkpoint or in some Western capitals, and the long hours these meetings took, and if we judge these meetings by their results, we must conclude that what is going on is nothing more than useless noise. The agreement with which the negotiating team was pleased and the smiles that were shared by the concerned sides during the signing protocol have disappeared thanks to Israel's ambitions and the way the Israeli leaders see this agreement, which encroaches on Palestinian national rights and which has harmed the people.

So many concessions have been made to meet Israel's demands, the Palestinian police have been turned into a tool implementing Israel's oppressive policy in broad daylight and the pledges to protect the security of Israeli soldiers have turned into violent confrontations to curb resistance. Meanwhile, Israel adheres to its policy of settlements and siege and rejects even the temporary redeployment. The Cairo summit, the meeting of the foreign ministers in Washington, the intensive bilateral meetings sponsored by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, and the personal participation of the U.S. President in the meeting have produced nothing new. All the parties have acknowledged that nothing was achieved. In light of this, we can say that everything is worsening, and that every side has lost its way.

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The question now is: What will these parties achieve after their summit meeting and their foreign ministers' meeting with the sponsor, who is supposed to be the referee and arbitrator? Doesn't this mean that the matter has begun to descend into the unknown, where there is no foundation, no rules, and no basic principles? As this is the case, have the decisionmakers proposed an alternative to that inevitable fate? So, why doesn't everybody admit the reality, confront it with responsibility, and disclose the facts to the people? Nothing will come out of Rabin and Peres—new or old—and there is no clear-cut, justified position adopted by the U.S. Administration. Beating this ruptured drum cannot last long, but it may last for some time as a result of shortsightedness.

Each day in the age of the Oslo agreement proves that the agreement is no more than a lifeless child and that injections can only prolongs the suffering, not give him any further health or life. Will the involved parties benefit from this large number of lessons?

TV Commentary Attacks Israel's Position on NPT

JN1902212395 Damascus Syrian Arab Television Network in Arabic 1905 GMT 19 Feb 95

[Commentary by Yusuf Maqdisi; from the "Behind the News" program]

[FBIS Translated Text] Good evening, gentlemen: Israel's position on the signing of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT] has attracted considerable attention as the date for renewing the NPT draws near. The NPT is scheduled to be renewed in April, 25 years after its endorsement. This attention stems from the Rabin government's declared position that it will consider signing the NPT only after comprehensive peace is achieved in the region and after the threat of extinction—posed to Israel by some countries, such as Iran—is removed. In fact, Israel has gone a step further when it announced that even if Iran signs the NPT, it will not do so. This is because Iran, as Israeli Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres has claimed, does not respect its signature, and consequently, its signature is meaningless because its threat to Israel will continue as long as its policy is hostile to Israel.

Thus, Israel considers its nuclear armament a private issue that concerns it alone. Israel thinks that no one has the right to raise this issue with it because it is linked to its security concerns which, it claims, take precedence over any other matter. This explains Israel's position at the Cairo quadrilateral summit and at the five-way foreign ministers' meeting in Washington. At those meetings, Israel insisted on not raising the issue of signing the NPT, even if this leads to the collapse of the peace process and to a nuclear arms race in the region that could have serious consequences on world peace if it is allowed to go on freely.

This Israeli position clearly reflects its approach, which is based on the argument that its military superiority enables it to achieve its objectives through the use of force or through other means, and that the peace it approves of is that which commits the Arab and regional sides to the acceptance of the requirements of its security, which include a list of conditions. These conditions begin by reducing the military forces of this or that Arab state and end by providing protection to all that is Israeli, as a kind of goodwill gesture toward Israel. This is in addition to expediting all forms of normalization with it, which means, in essence, dealing with Israel as a sacred totem in the region.

Gentlemen: Israel plans its policy according to its own interests only and ignores the interests of any Arab state, whether it has a peace agreement with it or not. Any conflict with its interests means, in Israel's strategy, a position hostile to it and to the kind of peace that it understands and interprets as an acknowledgement by others of commitment to its security and hegemony over Arab and regional arenas.

Gentlemen: The peace process, which was launched at the Madrid Conference, has revealed several positions and cards steeped in hostility toward the just and comprehensive peace, and which seek to expropriate the UN resolutions and deal with Arab parties, individually one after the other, by drawing strength from its military arsenal, which is replete with advanced and nuclear weapons, and by taking advantage of the deterioration in the Arab situation and the wager by some Arab parties on joining its umbrella to infiltrate the Arab arena.

However, the winds are not blowing the Israeli ship's way. Israel is confronted by the Syrian position, which constitutes a solid wall to foil the Israeli containment schemes. It is also confronted by the requirements of Syrian and Lebanese security and every Arab state that adheres to its sovereignty and the requirements of Arab security, which constitutes the framework to protect Arab interests from Israeli hegemony. This was particularly demonstrated in the Alexandria summit, which grouped Presidents Hafiz al-Asad and Husni Mubarak and King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, and in the Damascus Declaration ministers' meeting in Cairo. These two meeting confirmed adherence to the just and comprehensive peace and support for the positions of Syria and Lebanon. They also stressed the need to work for reactivating the course of Arab action to make it rise to the level of the challenges facing the Arab nation, particularly the Israeli challenge, which is hostile to peace, and the Israeli nuclear threat, which results from Israel's refusal to sign the NPT and open its nuclear facilities to international supervision.

Gentlemen: The Israeli practices remind us of those of the high commissioners, who used to think that as soon as they issued an order, it must be obeyed. However, that time has passed. The Arab homeland is not an Israeli farm and will never be. The policy of power which Israel is exercising will not achieve the kind of peace that suits it. Instead, it will bring to the region threats that have

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unpredictable consequences. This means that for peace to be just and comprehensive, Israel must acknowledge the requirements of peace in terms of justice and comprehensiveness; which means relinquishing all the occupied Arab territories and providing equitable and balanced peace for all parties.

Press Views Israeli Statements on Golan, Lebanon

JN2002094195 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0545 GMT 20 Feb 95

[Press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] AL-BA'TH comments on the Israeli officials' statements on the peace process. In this regard, the paper refers to Israeli Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres' statements that his government has not said that it will withdraw fully from the Golan. In his statements, Peres also dismissed his government's intention to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. AL-BA'TH says that there is nothing new in Peres' statements, but they come at a time when the leaders of Israel claim that they are working for the establishment of peace in the region. However, they claim, Syria is not responsive.

The paper asks: How does Israel understand responsiveness? It adds: If Israel believes—as it certainly does—that Syria should follow others' steps and give up everything, then definitely the leaders of Israel are more than mistaken. AL-BA'TH adds: Syria views the establishment of a just, comprehensive peace a strategic option. It has done everything possible for peace. It played a basic role to launch the peace process in Madrid, and stressed commitment to all conditions and requirements that ensure the success of the peace process.

The paper adds: Meanwhile, Israel continues to adhere to its aggressive, expansionist policy aimed at taking everything without giving anything in return. It wants from Syria agreements similar to those signed with others. This is rejected by Syria and will continue to be rejected.

Concluding its comment, AL-BA'TH says: If they indicate anything, Shim'on Peres' statements indicate that Israel is pursuing a policy that totally contradicts the efforts being made to boost the peace process and the required steps to arrive at its true objective based on the resolutions of international legitimacy.

In its comment, TISHRIN discusses the continuous Israeli attacks on the towns and villages of southern Lebanon. TISHRIN says: The Israeli guns and missiles are not destroying the houses and property of defenseless Lebanese citizens more than they are destroying peace opportunities in the Middle East. They are a clear message to the international quarters sponsoring the peace process. Those quarters should face such acts with the appropriate language through the international institutions so that Israel would not become the only exception in the world and the entity that does not respect the international community.

The paper says that the Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon and the Israeli repression in the West Bank are two faces of one message which says that Israel has completely put aside the peace process.

Referring to the Oslo agreement, TISHRIN says: Israel dictated the articles of this agreement and then promoted it extensively, claiming then that the agreement established the aspired peace in the region. However, it now refuses to implement it, especially regarding the redeployment of the Israeli Army and withdrawing it from cities and holding elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Before anything else, Israel insists that the self-rule police should aim its rifles at the chests of the resisting Palestinians, put an end to the intifadah, and drown the Gaza Strip is in a bloodbath. Only then, Israel would consider the implementation of the Oslo agreement.

The paper continues: On the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, Israel refused to be committed to full withdrawal from the Golan in return for full peace and insists on extremely complicated security arrangements.

Concluding its comment, TISHRIN says: To become established, peace requires actions. However, Israel's actions are the glaring opposite of peace and a flagrant defiance of the international community and its principles and resolutions. Such actions will only increase the determination of Syria, Lebanon, and all Arabs to fully restore their territories and rights.

Radio Reiterates Rejection of Partial Peace Plans

JN2002153895 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1235 GMT 20 Feb 95

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Gentlemen: The Israeli officials are unanimous that stalemate prevails on the Syrian-Israeli track. However, instead of admitting that their stands and policies have led the peace process to this situation, they try to hold Syria responsible for this. Israeli Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres arrogantly claims that Israel is very close to peace, but that he does not know Syria's position. How can Israel's stands and its officials remarks be understood? Does he who announces that he is close to peace reject the most important bases of establishing this peace? Does he who works for peace continue his aggression on a daily basis against a sovereign country which is a member of the United Nations; namely, Lebanon? Does he carry out terrorist and repressive operations against people who are under occupation and ignore the Fourth Geneva Convention on the rights of peoples under the yoke of occupation? Does he who seeks to achieve peace bring large quantities of the most sophisticated weapons from the big powers' depots and stores, develop his war arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, and refuse to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty? Does he who seeks peace announce before the whole world that he is not ready to relinquish

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the territories he occupied by the force of arms and aggression, and build settlements on these territories on which basic negotiations are held? The Israeli officials' statements on peace completely contradict their behavior and actions. We do not believe that there is anyone in the world who can understand this contradiction or believe these allegations while watching the Israelis' actions and the obstacles they place on the road to peace.

Regarding Syria's position, about which Peres says he does not know, it has become understood by the international community and all world states, particularly the peace cosponsors, Russia and the United States. Syria calls for the implementation of the UN resolutions that stress the impermissibility of occupying other's land by force, and for abiding by the land-for-peace principle proposed by the U.S. Administration as one of the bases of the peace process that was launched from Madrid, and which, without Syria, would not have started. Syria wants peace, and it is committed to it. However, it will not accept any peace at any price. Moreover, it will not accept deals that have nothing to do with peace. When it holds negotiations, it negotiates for the peace of the brave, the just and comprehensive peace that returns to it its land and rights in full. If Israel thinks that Syria will submit under threats, intimidation, and pressure, and accept a deal that would keep one iota of its soil under occupation, it is undoubtedly deluded. Syria agreed to join the peace process more than three years ago based on a strategic view and the peaceful policy that it has adopted for half a century. Syria has always stressed that peace is a strategic option for it. In return, it believes that if peace is not comprehensive, it will not last. The deals and breakthroughs that have taken place here and there have not established peace. Any peace without Syria and Lebanon will not last. This is Syria's position, which Peres claims he does not know. This clear position should be taken into consideration in any future efforts. Syria's position, which is based on international legitimacy, has not changed and will not change today, tomorrow, or under any circumstances.

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Afghanistan

Taleban Official Details Movement's Objectives

JN2002152795 Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 17 Feb 95 pp 24, 25

[Interview with Mowlawi Mohammad Ma'sum Afghani, media official of the Taleban Movement, by unidentified correspondent in Quetta on the Afghan-Pakistani border; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Correspondent] How did the Taleban Movement emerge? How powerful is it? What is its organizational structure? And who leads it?

[Afghani] The Taleban movement emerged in (Banjawa'i) Directorate in the province of Qandahar six months ago after some 65 scholars and students met to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. They decided that most important issue in the current situation was security and the prevailing mayhem, in addition to the absence of Islamic government. Throughout the past few years, the parties have failed to handle the situation. In Qandahar, each field commander is a government by itself and has the final say. He levies taxes and sets up road blocks. Indeed, a person may be killed without any questioning, investigation, or trial. Besides, all kinds of pillaging and barbarism were spreading. Therefore, we decided that we had to make a move and we now control five Afghan provinces.

The leader of the party is Mowlawi Mohammad 'Omar from the province of Oruzgan. He is one of the mojahedin and fought against the Soviet forces during their invasion of Afghanistan.

[Correspondent] Sources say that your are receiving unlimited Pakistani support. What is the truth behind this?

[Afghani] This is false propaganda. The students are committed to the principles of their religion. The people are aware of all this propaganda and are seeing for themselves the difference between the Taleban Movement's rule and that of the parties in the past. We are seeking to end the oppression that the ordinary citizen has been suffering. The Afghan merchants are offering aid to the movement. We are not receiving aid from any quarters, not from the CIA and not from the Pakistani intelligence services. Those who claim so do not have any documentation to prove their claims. Otherwise, why do they not show these documents if they have them?

[Correspondent] Afghan Prime Minister Hekmatyar has accused the former British ambassador in Islamabad of forming the Taleban Movement and said that the Pakistani militias are fighting with you. How true is this?

[Afghani] This is a lie. If it is true, then let them reveal their evidence and documents. This is part of the propaganda campaign against us. We call on reporters and media people to visit the areas under our control to see for themselves the situation on the ground and to ask the people about the movement.

[Correspondent] You are talking about the movement as if it is made up of scholars and Islamic law students. Meanwhile, five or six months after your movement was established we saw pilots, tank technicians, artillery experts, and combat professionals among your ranks. Who are those people?

[Afghani] We have former pilots and technicians who witnessed the brutal situation and joined the students after they recognized the students good acts and understanding of the situation. They were communists, but now they are bearded Muslims who have abandoned their old ideas. We also have supporters from the era of Zahir Shah.

[Correspondent] Who are the rulers of the provinces that have come under your control?

[Afghani] The rulers of the provinces are Mowlawis and scholars. We appointed Mowlawi Abdolghani Jozjani [name as transliterated] as the ruler of the Zabol Province. Although he is from northern Afghanistan he is assigned to a southern province. Mowlawi Ehsanollah [name as transliterated] became the ruler of Ghazni Province. Some provinces are run by shura councils.

[Correspondent] What is the movement's future program after its defeat in Hekmatyar's stronghold?

[Afghani] Our program is to continue jihad until we achieve security and stability, until Islamic law is applied, and until Afghanistan become strong internally and externally. We have applied Islam in the provinces that we have taken control of and resorted to the Koran and Sunna as our judge. The situation in the field will improve soon. There is no doubt that the matter will take a long time. The opposition in the coordination council brought in huge concentrations to face us. We offered 25 martyrs and approximately 45 wounded. We do not follow an organized military method in combat. We first ask them to surrendered so that there will be no bloodshed, and many mojahedin surrendered in this way.

[Correspondent] Some people might ask why you did not try to reconcile both parties, and then, according to the Koran, fight the party that rejects reconciliation, that is the despotic group?

[Afghani] We tried. These parties have not kept the promises and charters reached in Islamabad, Peshawar, Mecca, or any of the places from which they announced that they had reached agreement. Therefore, such methods are useless with them.

[Correspondent] What will be your military objective after the fall of Meydan Province?

[Afghani] We will hold consultations, define the next objective, and try to reach Kabul to put an end to instability, looting, and killing in the capital.

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[Correspondent] It seems that there will be no Taleban representative in the government that will be formed by UN envoy Mestiri. Why? And how do you view the efforts of the UN secretary general's envoy to Afghanistan?

[Afghani] We are working for security and are ready to cooperate with Mestiri to maintain security. If security prevails through Mestiri's project, we will support it. But for now we do not want to send a Taleban representative to Mestiri's government.

[Correspondent] Some people believe that you are targeting Hekmatyar's positions to weaken him. What do you say?

[Afghani] This is more propaganda to accuse Taleban of cooperating with President Rabbani, while we reject both sides and maintain no ties with either side. We have disarmed the commanders and collected the weapons in the western Province of Qandahar. We first disarmed Mollah Najibollah, a well known commander from the Islamic Afghan Association lead by Borhanoddin Rabbani. We also disarmed commander Mollah Akhnadzadeh from the movement lead by Mowlawi Mohammad Bin Mohammadi, an ally of the head of the state. We are not affiliated with any party. We represent the Afghan people.

[Correspondent] Does this mean that you want a weapons-free Afghanistan as you are focusing on disarming the Afghan parties and factions?

[Afghani] We want a weapon-free Afghanistan, and we will try to collect weapons, which have caused destruction for our country.

[Correspondent] If you reach the Afghan capital, Kabul, what will you do to the members of the government there?

[Afghani] We follow the holy Koran and we will use way that is in line with the concept and with the method of the prophet's companions in choosing a ruler or a caliph.

[Correspondent] Do you refuse to hold general elections in Afghanistan?

[Afghani] It is premature to tackle this issue, and we do not want to comment on it.

[Correspondent] The movement's sources have previously rejected such elections?

[Afghani] I said this is premature.

[Correspondent] It has been said that the society for Muslim ulema lead by Mowlawi Fadlorrahman, an ally of the government of Benazir Bhutto, is extending support to you. Is this true?

[Afghani] We do not receive any such support. It is better for Fadlorrahman to extend such support to occupied Kashmir instead of Afghanistan. All this is unfounded tendentious propaganda.

UN Envoy Mestiri Arrives To Discuss Peace Plan

Rabbani Receives Mestiri

LD1802190695 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The press office of the Presidency reported to the BAKHTAR INFORMATION AGENCY [BIA] that esteemed Professor Borhanoddin Rabbani, president of the Islamic State of Afghanistan [ISA], last night received Mr. Mahmoud Mestiri, special envoy of the UN secretary general, for a meeting. During the meeting esteemed Mahmoud Mestiri presented his activities report about the peace process in our country to the esteemed president. Then the ISA president briefed Mestiri about the country's recent military and political developments, and expressed the hope that peace and security be ensured in the country very quickly.

Mestiri, who is working for a political solution to the Afghan problem, arrived yesterday in Kabul. A BIA correspondent reports: Before arriving in Kabul, Mestiri announced that the president of Afghanistan was completely ready to surrender power, and the necessity of the formation of an interim government had become closer. Then he announced that all Jihadi organizations had introduced their representatives to him, and emphasized that he will go to Kabul in the near future with a number of the representatives. Only a few days later drastic changes took place in Afghanistan's political and military scene. Golboddin Hekmatyar, a stubborn and adventurist side, could not fight the newly emerged Taleban group and most of his positions were captured by the Taleban group. Now Kabul is out of reach of Golboddin Hekmatyar's rockets, and the ground has become suitable for the activities of the UN. So far as the ISA is concerned, the state has already expressed readiness for the surrender of power. Abdol Aziz Murad, a spokesman for the ISA Presidency, said: The ISA is still certain about the surrender of power in keeping with the UN plan. But in such conditions that some groups have been forced out and new groups have emerged, the issue of the power surrender needs more negotiations. Referring to this point, Mestiri too, said: Some time is needed to assess the issue of the power transfer with different sides in the new political-military circumstances of Afghanistan. Other analysts are also of the opinion that without taking into account the stance of the newly emerged group, the issue of the power transfer will be difficult.

The people of Afghanistan are of the opinion that the arrival of Mr. Mestiri will enable the political solution of the Afghan problem to be speeded up. Now Kabul is calm. After the 1 January 1994 coup d'etat and the attacks by the putschists on the civilian airport, this is the first time that the aircraft carrying Mr. Mestiri has landed at Kabul International Airport. The people of Kabul consider this as a matter of good omen, and have been more assured about the speedy ensuring of peace, and appreciate the goodwill steps of the UN to resolve the country's current situation.

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UN Plan Hampered by Taleban Demands

BK2002144395 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1400 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Afghanistan, the Taleban are firm on taking security of Kabul as the UN special representative Mr. Mestiri, continues his efforts to resolve the differences among the Afghan leaders on the proposed transfer of power. Taleban has been demanding a neutral force composed of their fighters to take over security of Kabul. A spokesman of the Taleban, Mullah Borjan, told newsmen in Chahar Asiab that the UN peace plan will fail unless their demands are met. He said Taleban are the only impartial force capable of guaranteeing the security of Kabul. Another commander of Taleban said they will capture Kabul within two days, but they are concerned about civilian casualties.

Meanwhile, Mr. Mestiri had another meeting with President Borhanoddin Rabbani last night to discuss with him the latest developments arising out of the Taleban successes. The UN special representative is expected to meet today with Taleban leaders to discuss the transfer of power formula. Under the UN peace plan, President Borhanoddin Rabbani was due to hand over power today to a 30-member collective council which ran into snag due to the Taleban demand.

Meanwhile, sporadic clashes erupted between forces of President Rabbani and Hezb-e Wahadat factions in western Kabul. On another front, reports speak of intense fighting between President Rabbani and Golboddin Hekmatyar forces near Sarowbi. Radio Kabul has claimed that government forces have captured some strategic positions near Sarowbi. The warring factions are using light weapons and rockets. Some 20,000 people, mostly civilians, have died in fighting for the control since the collapse of Najibollah regime three years ago.

Taleban Demands Control of Kabul

BK2002081295 Hong Kong AFP in English 0803 GMT 20 Feb 95

[By Terence White]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Kabul, Feb 20 (AFP)—The Taleban movement vowed that the UN peace plan for Afghanistan due to have started Monday [20 February] would fail unless they controlled Kabul where new clashes between other rival factions resumed.

Sporadic clashes erupted between forces of President Borhanoddin Rabbani and the pro-Iranian Hezb-e Wahdat faction in western Kabul. But there is more attention on UN hopes to persuade Rabbani to stand down.

"The UN peace plan would fail unless our demands are met," Mollah Borjan [name as received] commander of the students-led army based outside Kabul reaffirmed to AFP.

Their main demand is for a "neutral" security force composed of Taleban fighters to be established in Kabul. "We are the only impartial force" capable to man the security, Borjan said.

Under the UN peace plan, Rabbani would hand over power to a collective council of about 30 "neutral" personalities and representatives of the mujahedeen groups. The "mechanism" for the handover was due be in place by Monday.

On top of the Taleban demands, the UN plan faces further difficulties from fundamentalist mujahedeen leader Yunes Khales who withdrew his nominee from the proposed council. Khales claimed UN special envoy Mahmoud Mestiri was to impose an "un-Islamic administration" on Afghanistan.

Khales on Sunday announced support for the Taleban who had already demanded nomination of "good Muslims" on the council.

Afghan sources in Islamabad said Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, former defense minister and Rabbani's righthand man, had demanded the defence portfolio in the proposed council.

Observers said this could become a stumbling block as it may not be acceptable to other particularly the Taleban, who want Mas'ud's forces withdrawn from Kabul. [passage omitted]

"Its not a problem for us to capture Kabul," a Taleban commander in the area said. "We could do it in two days but we are concerned about the civilian casualties." [passage omitted]

Taleban States Other 'Conditions'

BK2002121595 Hong Kong AFP in English 1148 GMT 20 Feb 95

[By Terence White]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Chahar Asiab, Afghanistan, Feb 20 (AFP)—UN mediators and radical Islamic students failed Monday [20 February] to end the deadlock threatening the UN plan to end Afghanistan's latest civil war.

A special UN delegation and leaders of the militant Taleban movement met in Chahar Asiab, south of Kabul, but failed to agree on conditions for the movement's role in the Afghan peace "mechanism."

"We told the UN, if you meet our conditions, your process will succeed," said Mollah Borjan [name as received], commander of the Taleban base of Chahar Asiab.

The Taleban, whose fighters are within 15 kilometers (nine miles) of Kabul, want control of security in the capital before President Borhanoddin Rabbani transfers power to a proposed interim governing council.

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The interim council was to be a prelude for a nationwide ceasefire.

Two other Taleban conditions are that council members be "good Muslims" and that all of Afghanistan's 30 provinces be represented.

Pro-Rabbani frontline troops scoff at the security demand.

"We will never let them enter the city, no way," said a pro- Rabbani trooper seen digging new bunkers and cleaning heavy weapons on the eastern Kabul frontlines.

UN special negotiator Mahmud Mestiri and four Afghan members of the proposed council met the Taliban delegates for two hours at a disused hospital in Chahar Asiab.

Parked outside the hospital were six Russian-made T-55 and T-62 tanks and two armoured vehicles, which the Taleban said they had captured from Golboddin Hekmatyar's anti-Rabbani Hezb-e Eslami faction, driven from Chahar Asiab a week ago.

Taleban commander Mullah Borjan said he hoped for peace through negotiation, not fighting, and added that talks would continue.

The UN made no statement on Monday's talks, which Afghan sources said the delegation sought to persuade the Taleban to join the proposed interim governing council, which Mestiri calls a "mechanism".

Unless compromise is reached soon, the prospects of peace in Kabul are considered dim, although a showdown between pro-Rabbani forces and the Taleban does not appear imminent.

"It's not a problem for us to capture Kabul", said a Taleban commander in the area. "We could do it in two days but we are concerned about the civilian casualties". The Afghan capital has an estimated population of 800,000.

Rabbani has asked for inclusion of the Talebans in the proposed council.

Former defence minister Ahmad Shah Mas'ud has also insisted on a seat in the council, which is expected to have around 30 members.

Afghan sources in Islamabad said Mas'ud wants the defence portofolio in the future council but that is likely to be opposed both by the Talebans and other factions.

In Kabul, some Afghans suggest that Rabbani's expressed desire for a Taleban role the UN peace mechanism could be a tactic to stay on in power.

Rabbani's two-year term as president ended on December 28, 1994.

Hezb-e Wahdat Near Agreement With Taleban

BK2002122995 Hong Kong AFP in English 1204 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb 20 (AFP)—The Afghan Shiite Muslim group Hezb-e Wahdat is close to reaching an agreement to avoid confrontation with the powerful new army of Islamic militants, the Talebans, Wahdat's envoy to Iran said here Monday [20 February].

Mohammad Nateqi told AFP negotiations were underway with Taleban leaders in several Afghan cities and in Pakistan and that the two groups had "resolved 90 percent of their differences."

"Talebans have no problem with us. They are organising against the forces" of President Borhanoddin Rabbani, he said. "We told them we are only after our rights, and they responded positively."

Talebans, who are mostly Sunni Muslims, have become a key player in Afghan politics following a series of dramatic military victories. They have conquered one-third of the country in the past six months.

Nateghi said the Shiites would be ready to give up their weapons only after Rabbani forces were disarmed by the Talebans.

The pro-Iranian Wahdat and Rabbani forces have been engaged in sporadic fighting in the past several days. The rapid advance of Talebans toward Kabul has put the Shiites in a precarious position, trapped between Rabbani forces and the militants.

The Wahdat leader Abul 'Ali Mazari has reportedly demanded that his forces be allowed to withdraw to more central districts, but the students have insisted they leave their arms first.

Meanwhile, the official Iranian news agency IRNA said former Afghan Prime Minister Golboddin Hekmatyar had offered to join the student-led militants to fight against Rabbani forces.

An envoy of Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Eslami in Iran did not rule out cooperation with the militants but neither confirmed nor denied the report.

Abuzar Pirzadeh told AFP his group had decided to give the Talebans a chance to realise their slogans and establish an Islamic government in Kabul.

The Hezb gave up positions south of the Afghan capital to the Talebans last week.

Mestiri Flies to Pakistan for Consultations

BK2102111095 Hong Kong AFP in English 1101 GMT 21 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Feb 21 (AFP)—United Nations special envoy for Afghanistan, Mahmud Mestiri, flew to Pakistan Tuesday [21 February] after failing to persuade the new militant Muslim movement, the Taleban, to accept a plan for power transfer in Kabul.

"I will return to Kabul tomorrow," Mestiri told AFP.

He said he would have talks with "10 to 12" Pakistan-based members of the so-called "mechanism"—or

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interim governing body—to which Afghan President Borhanoddin Rabbani is scheduled to hand over power.

The transition, now seven weeks overdue, is blocked by several issues:

The list of candidates for the UN-plan has not been finalised, the Taleban refuse to participate, and their demand to control security in Kabul has been rejected by other factions.

Commentary Views Problems Facing UN Peace Plan

LD2002191395 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 20 Feb 95

[BAKHTAR commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] While the UN envoy's efforts continue in Kabul, fresh problems have emerged before him. A BAKHTAR INFORMATION AGENCY political commentator writes:

The Islamic State of Afghanistan has accepted in entirety the United Nations-proposed mechanism. The list of the proposed commission members has been published. But now fresh problems have emerged before the United Nations. The Taleban group, now in the south of Kabul, is not ready to introduce a representative to the commission. The change in the power balance around Kabul and the military defeat of Golboddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Eslami have made the previous equations alterable and have posed new problems to the structure of the commission. After the announcement of the commission some parties opposed the United Nations. Ettehad-e Eslami, led by Abdorrab Rasul Sayyaf, has not introduced a representative, and Mowlawi Mohammad Yunes Khales has announced that he would recall his representative and would not participate in the commission. In the meantime, Abdol Ali Mazari, who is under military siege in Kabul and whom Hezb-e Wahdat, led by Sayd 'Alemi Balkhi, and Harakat-e Eslami call an adventurist and an anti-peace element, expressed his clear opposition to the proposed list.

Some personalities included in the proposed commission refuse to participate in it. Dr. Yusof, a former prime minister, did not come to Kabul due to illness and Samad Hamed [a former deputy prime minister] rejected it. Only four persons included in the announced list have come to Kabul, who want to hold talks with the representatives of the Taleban group. Now the United Nations faces a great difficulty, whose solution requires much effort from the organizations and forces. It is better for the United Nations—whose efforts are supported by the Islamic State of Afghanistan—to take into account the newly emerged realities. The proposed commission, which is not represented by all sides and in which the representation of the forces is not based on their strength, cannot be successful. Besides this, an important executive guarantee by the United Nations and the neighboring countries as regards future noninterference and the preservation of state and security structures of the country are important conditions for the implementation of any program. They are the matters that cannot be ignored.

Fierce Fighting Continues Among Factions

Taleban Captures Paktika Province

BK1902091995 Hong Kong AFP in English 0746 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad, Feb 19 (AFP)—Taleban religious fighters strengthened their grip on Afghanistan Sunday [19 February], capturing without resistance another province to the cheers of local residents, Afghan sources said.

Riding on tanks and armoured vehicles, Taleban troops drove into Paktika, southeast of Kabul, at dawn to a rousing welcome by the residents, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said.

"There was no resistance," it said, adding that the Islamic student-led army entered the provincial capital Sharan without any arms fire. The city's fall was announced earlier by the Pakistani press but had not been confirmed.

There are no major military installations in the captured area, but it is politically significant as its chief commander was Arsala Rahmani, deputy prime minister in the Afghan cabinet headed by President Borhanoddin Rabbani.

Afghan observers said the takeover of Paktika has made vulnerable an important garrison city, Gardez, capital of nearby Paktia Province. Paktia's key city of Khowst is already held by Taleban supporters.

The takeover may also give the Taleban control of an important road leading to the northwestern Pakistani border town of Wana and nearby Angur Adda market, hub of commercial activity in the region, they said.

The province was jointly controlled by commanders of Rabbani's Jam'iyat-e Eslami, moderate leader Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi Harekat-e Enqelab-e Eslami and fundamentalist leader Yunes Khales.

The Taleban, emerging six months ago from religious schools in Pakistan, have already overrun several Afghan provinces in their march towards Kabul, already holding one-third of the country.

The movement has delayed a United Nations peace plan scheduled for the weekend to transfer power in the capital to a neutral governing body to end the more than five years of factional fighting in Afghanistan.

The Taleban's most significant victory was the fall Tuesday of the Chahar Asiab headquarters of former prime minister Golboddin Hekmatyar, 25 kilometres (15 miles) south of the Afghan capital.

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Determined to enter the Afghan capital, the Taleban are just 15 kilometres (nine miles) from central Kabul.

The Taleban want to disarm all groups in Kabul and enforce a strict Islamic way of life on the country. The religious army is increasingly drawing support from the people of Afghanistan, tired of the fighting and their miserable living conditions.

Mojahedin Repel Attack by 'Mazari Band'

LD1702171995 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The seditious 'Abdol 'Ali Mazari band [reference to Mazari's Islamic Unity Party] launched an unsuccessful attack last night on the mojahedin of the Islamic Army positions. The seditious Mazari band launched an unsuccessful attack last night on the positions of the Islamic Army from the direct of Takhnik-e Sanawi and Dehmazang. The Mazari band's attack was pushed back by the mojahedin of the Islamic Army and heavy loss of life was imposed on the seditious Mazari band.

In the course of this attack and after their defeat, the Mazari men subjected the residential areas of Kabul city to heavy weapons fire, as a result of which several houses were destroyed and a number of the defenseless citizens of Kabul city were either killed or injured.

As a result of a rocket attack by the Mazari band, the electric power sub-station in north Kabul was partially destroyed.

'Abdol 'Ali Mazari's band is embarking on such seditious activities and fighting at a time when the ground is being prepared for the restoration of peace in the country and in particular in Kabul city, and when Golboddin Hekmatyar, collaborator with Mazari's seditious band, has been forced out of Kabul province, and the citizens of Kabul have finally been relieved from the evil of his rockets.

Army Captures 'Strategic' Sarobi Areas

LD1902164695 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Strategic and important areas in Sarobi District were captured today by the Islamic army forces. A security source of the country told a BAKHTAR INFORMATION AGENCY correspondent that Islamic army forces cleared this morning areas surrounding Lataband and some strategic and important areas near Sarobi of Golboddin's militia and captured them. It is said that during the operation, the headquarters of a brigade of Golboddin's militia was totally destroyed and its combat equipment captured by the Islamic army and mojahedin forces as a booty. Huge financial damages as well as loss of life have been inflicted on Golboddin's men during this clearing-up operation.

Military Clears Dostam 'Dirt' in Jawzjan

LD1902171995 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] According to a report received from the 26th Jihadi Division of Jawzjan Province, mojahedin of the 26th Jihadi Division of Jawzjan, led by 26th division commander Al-Haj Mohammad Rahim, cleared the areas of Haft Maydan, Kashan, Sarghola, [words indistinct] in Kohestan District of the dirt of the Dostam militia. Mr. Bahonar, commander of Kashan-Haft Maydan battalion, played an active and valuable role in the operation. As a result, three members of the Dostam band were killed, six others wounded, and 20 others taken prisoner. Weapons captured by the Islamic army forces as a booty include 80 Kalashnikovs, two RPG rocket launchers, three PK [machine guns], two DShK [machine guns], and eight light Brno machine guns.

Defense Ministry Orders Forces To Return Weapons

LD2002163195 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Order of the Ministry of Defense of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, 20 February:

Taking into account the recent fundamental changes in the country's political-military situation, especially in the city of Kabul, as a result of the heavy blows dealt by the mojahedin and members of the armed forces, militia's nests in Charasiab, around Kabul, and in other parts of the country have been eliminated. To further strengthen order and discipline in the armed forces and to achieve perpetual peace in the country I [not further identified] order the following:

1. All units of the Islamic army are ordered to collect all different kinds of weapons of the personnel and to store them in the units' depots in keeping with the regulations of the Islamic army of Afghanistan. 2. All heavy weapons, equipments, and combat technology will be collected and placed in the related units after conservation [preceding word in English]. 3. Combat weapons and vehicles will be used according to duty requirements and after informing authoritative offices. 4. All weapons, combat vehicles, and technology will be counted and preserved by the technical and ordinance department in line with the regulations. 5. All personnel, heads of departments, and commanders of the units of the armed forces of the country, especially in Kabul city, are responsible for implementing this order. In the event of violations the officials will be treated according to the enforced laws of Afghanistan.

India

ASEAN-India Committee Work Out Trade Agreement

BK1802114195 Delhi Doordarshan Television Network in English 1630 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A program of cooperation has been worked out by the ASEAN-India Joint Sectoral

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Cooperation Committee in four areas of trade, investment, science and technology, and tourism. During its five-day meeting in New Delhi which concluded today, the committee also recognized that the enviornment is now more favorable for trade and investment expansion. It also recommended several measures such as exchange of information, holding of investment fairs, and convening of an ASEAN-India round table conference to enhance trade and investment.

ASEAN has also agreed to eliminate nontariff barriers over the next five years, facilitating Indian firms in setting up joint ventures in the ASEAN region. This was stated by the ASEAN secretary general, Datuk Ajit Singh, during a discussion with the minister of state for commerce, Mr. P. Chidambaram, in New Delhi today. Mr. Chidambaram suggested that there is a need for greater efforts on both sides to increase Indian exports to ASEAN in view of increasing imports from that region.

The ASEAN secretary general aslo called on the prime minister. The two leaders discussed the possibilities of setting up joint ventures between India and the ASEAN countries. Datuk Ajit Singh said the ASEAN countries have shown interest in entering the banking and civil aviation sectors in India. Mr. Narasimha Rao informed him that the ceiling restriction [as heard] on Indian investors abroad is being increased to facilitate more investment by them in joint ventures. Datuk Ajit Singh sought India's help in teaching English in some of the ASEAN countries.

First Phase of Gujarat Elections Begins

BK2002032695 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Gujarat, polling is now underway for the first phase of assembly elections. Ninety-six constituencies spread over 10 districts are involved in today's polling. AIR [All India Radio] correspondents, after touring various polling booths in Ahmedabad city and Jamnagar District, report that people were queuing up to cast their votes. In some booths, long queues of women were seen. Elaborate arrangements have been made for a free and fair poll. One hundred and twenty-five companies of paramilitary forces, in addition to the state police, have been deployed to ensure peaceful polling.

In the second phase on Saturday [25 February], polling will take place in the remaining 86 constituencies.

'Moderate' Voting Reported

BK2002130695 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Moderate polling has been reported in the first phase of Gujarat assembly elections covering 96 constituencies. Polling which ended this evening was peaceful barring two minor incidents in Ahmedabad. According to initial reports, 50 to 55 percent of votes have been recorded. In Rajkot District, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] candidate in Goudal constituency, Mr. Ramesh Suchitra, and five others have been arrested for violating prohibitory orders. Despite this, polling in Rajkot was peaceful and 12 percent of polling was reported in the first three hours of polling.

Final Phase of Elections Begins in Manipur

BK1902085395 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Manipur, polling for the second and final phase of elections in 39 constituencies is now in progress. Polling began at 0700 this morning. The three valley districts of Imphal, Thoubal, and Bishenpur are going to the polls in this phase. Elections to the Lamsang constituency have been countermanded. Our Imphal correspondent reports that voters in large numbers lined up in front of several polling stations well ahead of the scheduled time inspite of inclement weather. About seven and a half lakh voters will be exercizing their franchise and decide the fate of 211 candidates, including five women. Prominent among the contestants are the speaker of the outgoing house, Mr. E. Veeramani Singh; the deputy chief minister, Mr. T.H. Chaoba Singh; and the former speaker, Dr. Borobabu Singh. Polling is being held in 1,122 polling stations manned by more than 9,000 officials. A strong force of over 2,500 paramilitary and police personnel have been deployed for the smooth conduct of the polls. Security measures have been beefed up following the call by the outlawed PRF [People's Revolutionary Front] to boycott today's elections.

'Heavy' Turnout; 5 Killed

BK1902145495 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1430 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Manipur, the second and final phase of polling to the 60-member assembly ended this evening with heavy to very heavy turnout of voters. According to reports reaching Imphal, voting for 39 constituencies in the three valley districts ranged between 80 to 90 percent. Long queues of voters could be seen outside heavily guarded polling booths all through the day. In all 221 candidates are in the fray. Election to Lamsang constituency was countermanded following the killing of the Manipur People's Party candidate.

Meanwhile, five persons including one woman were killed in several poll related violent incidents in the valley area. Counting will be taken up on Tuesday [21 February].

Editorial Stresses 'Enormity' of Unemployment

BK1802095495 Delhi INDIAN EXPRESS in English 18 Feb 95 p 8

[Editorial: "Where are the jobs?"]

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[FBIS Transcribed Text] It is a pointer to the enormity of the unemployment problem facing the country that a record number of 10 lakh youths have applied for 16 posts of clerks advertised by the Kerala Public Service Commission. It is also a reflection of the nation's failure to tackle the unemployment problem, which has already started gnawing at its vitals. Every year, as many as 40 lakh people join the ranks of the unemployed, whose figure now stands at around 3 crore. As against this, the organised sector is able to provide only about four lakh jobs, which is a pity. If anything, it shows how meaningless the Mandal hullabaloo was over the jobs that are not there. And added to all this is the fact that every year about 1.8 crore children are born, who need to be fed, educated and finally given employment. Yet, the problem does not seem to have received the attention it deserves. Most political parties have shown interest only on winning the votes of the unemployed. For instance, in Kerala, the left Democratic Front once used it to its advantage when it offered 10 lakh jobs in its election manifesto. In Orissa, the ruling Janata Dal has made similar promises in the on-going Assembly elections. On its part, the Central government is content with trumpeting the achievements of its Jawahar Rozgar Yojana.

Many of the socio-economic problems facing the country like the growing crime rate, increasing urbanisation and the growth of extremism can easily be attributed to unemployment. Apart from resorting to piecemeal solutions like declaring the current year as the Year of Employment, as Madhya Pradesh Government has just done, there is no long-term planning to solve the basic issue. Since unemployment is a problem even rich Western nations have not succeeded in solving, it would be unwise to believe in government projections which suggest that by the end of the Ninth Plan in 2002, it would have been soived. On the contrary, the present trend suggests that the number of the unemployed would have grown to over 9 crore by then. And if the new economic policy is not handled with imagination and care, there is the possibility of joblessness becoming worse as the number of openings in the government sector would be minimised. While there is no immediate solution to the problem, steps like curtailing the unbridled growth in population, encouraging employment-oriented projects and equipping the youth to find self-employment will certainly go a long way in keeping unemployment at least under check. The rulers should also think of the impact an unsolved unemployment problem can have on the political system.

Iran

'Kamikaze' Pilots Said Training To Attack Israel

TA1702180295 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT (LESHABAT supplement) in Hebrew 17 Feb 95 pp 2, 3

[Interview with Dr. Manuchehr Ganji, director of the Paris-based Office for Human Rights in Iran and a former Iranian education minister, by Orli Azulay-Katz, in Ganji's office; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Azulay-Katz] Dr. Ganji, does the information you receive come from reliable sources?

[Ganji] From most reliable sources. Do not forget that I was a minister until the revolution. I know people in the security services, I have connections, and I know how to identify the sources. We have a network of 3,000-4,000 informants in Iran, including in the government's most sensitive places.

Let me give you an example: A week before former Iranian Prime Minister Shahpur Bakhtiar was murdered in Paris we received a message by fax warning us that the Iranians intended to kill him, the Shah's son, and me. I immediately alerted both of them, but Bakhtiar refused to allow the French police into his house. He did not take proper precautions, and that was his fault. A week later he was shot dead.

[Azulay-Katz] What is the latest information you have received?

[Ganji] I have here a two-week-old report which could interest Israel very much. It says that a secret camp has been set up in Iran to train kamikaze pilots to carry out suicide attacks on Israeli targets. It does not mention the nationality of the trainees. According to this report, four such pilots have already finished the training course and left Iran to get ready for their missions.

[Azulay-Katz] Do you think the source is reliable?

[Ganji] It is a most reliable source which, on the same occasion, gave me another piece of information: Iran intends to send agents to Israel. They will pose as Jews immigrating to Israel, probably from Syria. There is no absolute certainty about the cover they will use.

[Azulay-Katz] What do your sources say about missing navigator Ron Arad?

[Ganji] Unfortunately, the information I have about Ron Arad is dated July 1992. According to it, the Israeli navigator was then being held by the Iranians, at Qal'eh-Hesar Prison's Ward 5. [end Ganji]

Ganji sat opposite me, going through pages written in Persian in a black file. Every now and then he pressed a buzzer and asked one of his assistants to bring in more documents. In the next room there were four or five youngsters who help him sort the information.

I asked him to look in his files for additional information directly or indirectly related to Israel. Ganji pulled out a summary of the reports received from Tehran in 1994 and read to me the following data.

—On 8 January, $1 million was transferred from the Iranian Government's bank account to Shaykh Fadlallah, the leader of Hizballah in Lebanon.

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—On 11 January, the Iranian authorities informed Hafiz al-Asad that they were ceasing their monetary grants. This was to pressure him not to engage in a peace process with Israel.

—On 4 April Iranian President Rafsanjani and Fallahian, head of the Iranian security services, held a meeting in which it was decided to carry out political terror activities in Egypt and Turkey. A few days earlier, money was transferred to radical Muslim organizations in Turkey.

—On 19 May it was reported that the Syrian airline's offices in Cyprus were being used as a cover for an Islamic terror base operating from them. [passage omitted]

Khamene'i Second Sermon on Popular Support

LD1702121795 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran Provincial Network in Persian 0903 GMT 17 Feb 95

[Second Friday prayer sermon by Ayatollah 'Ali Hoseyni Khamene'i, leader of the Islamic revolution, in Tehran—live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful. [passage omitted]

In this sermon, I wish very briefly to discuss one issue only, and that is: The great advantage of our revolution has been its reliance on the people. The solution to the problems too—no matter what those problems are—will be possible only by relying upon the people and the nation's strength. The fact that the enemy has thus far failed to harm this state and this movement is because the people are the true backers of this revolution. [shouts from the crowd]

The move staged by you, the Iranian nation, on the 22nd of Bahman this year [11 February] was one of those miraculous moves that inflicted a decisive blow on many of the conspiracies and hostilities and frustrated them. It has always been the same, and it must also remain the same in the future. Thanks to your move, you neutralized a year-long propaganda campaign, that is, the propaganda from the 22nd of Bahman, or the Jerusalem day last year, until this year.

For a regime, losing popular support is a very major loss and is a shortcoming beyond description. The biggest issue for a regime would be the lack of popular backing. Today, among the countries of the Middle East—the same countries that the United States considers as its friends—there are a number of states that do not enjoy any popular support at all. If you look at the world's states, you do not need to look at the far away places; you would see other countries with different regimes that lack popular support.

The enemies could not bear to see this Islamic state, this Koranic country, and this popular state. That is why they were trying to wage repeated propaganda against us by saying the people of Iran are disillusioned with the regime. The people have turned against the government. The people no longer believe in this government. The people have turned away from Islam. They used to even broadcast all these things through their radio stations. However, this year—on the 22nd of Bahman—you, the Iranian nation, passed an amazing test. In fact, what you did was like a heavy punch on the mouths of those nonsense babblers. [shouts of approval from crowd]

Please pay attention: If I were to thank you in one sentence, I should say I hope the holy heart of the Lord of the Age [12th and Hidden Shiite imam] is satisfied with you the Iranian people for this act of yours. [crowd chants]

God willing, this act of yours has pleased his holiness, and I hope you continue to please him.

Well, keep what I have told you in mind. Of course, if anyone listened to alien radio stations after 22nd Bahman, then he would understand how angry they were. Why? Because they were trying to portray this great movement as small. This movement was indescribable—really indescribable and magnificent—in Tehran and in the cities, in most of the cities. The people's fervor and the greatness of what took place was magnificent. Well, it should be said: You fools! What is it that you want to influence? Who are you speaking to? The same people who have seen what was the truth? Are you telling these same people that the rallies were nothing?

They described the million-strong gathering of the people of Tehran as tens of thousands. Some of them said a few thousand. How many thousands were there? That rare, million-strong gathering.... [pauses] On that day, I thought to myself, when I saw what happened on 22nd Bahman, when I saw how magnificent the people's presence was, I thought that there is no country today in this world where its government can bring people into the streets with any slogan. The U.S. Government does not have such power, the European governments do not have this power, and Third World governments do not have this power either. There is no country in the world that can put on such a magnificent movement.

Even in Iran, however, one cannot say someone brought the people out into the streets. No, the people themselves came out. Why? Because in Iran the people themselves are the body and soul. The government are the people, the officials are the people, the government is in the people's hands, and the system belongs to the people. Do not forget this.

The last point: The Americans are trying to put pressure on the people of Iran. They are incensed. They are pulling their hair out and threatening all the people and governments that they can reach so that they might be able to put pressure on the Iranian people, so that they might force the Iranian Government to surrender, to weaken this 16-year-long resistance.

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In the presence of this huge crowd that is now attending Tehran's Friday prayers, and on behalf of the vast majority of the Iranian people, let me say this: O enemies of the Iranian people! Understand that you cannot bring the Iranian people to their knees with these tricks or any other trick. [crowd chants] [passage omitted]

'Massive Turnout' for Friday Prayers

LD1702130995 Tehran IRNA in English 1231 GMT 17 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] [passage omitted] On February 11, over two million people converged on the sprawling Azadi (Liberty) Square in western Tehran, to show solidarity with the Islamic system and their determination to counter the plots of global arrogance.

The massive turnout, which has become a regular event every year despite the feverish propaganda of the western media horns, once again poured water on the vain desires of the enemies of the Islamic revolution. All cities and towns in Iran last Saturday [11 February], witnessed similar grand spectacles.

Earlier in his first sermon Grand Ayatollah Khamene'i dwelt on the philosophy of prayer and supplication in Islam, and repeated the famous tradition that "supplication is the armour of the faithful".

He said, supplications establish a firm bridge between the almighty creator and the creatures, and lifts man above the material trappings of the mundane world.

"Supplications are the weapons of the faithful to ward off the plots of enemies and to seek provisions," he said.

The leader drew attention in this regard to the highly eloquent and moving supplications of Prophet Mohammad (Sawa) and the infallible imams of his household, and said, these serve as the finest lessons of Islamic ethics, patience in the face of problems, hope against despondency and the stimulus for constructive work in society.

He made special mention of the grand night of Qadr which falls on the 23rd eve of Ramadhan, which is the night on which affairs for the whole year are decreed. Special prayers and supplications are recommended that night, which is also regard [words indistinct] revelation of the holy Qur'an.

Pakistani Envoy Rejects U.S. Accusations

LD1902113895 Tehran IRNA in English 0953 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb 19, IRNA—Pakistan's Ambassador to Tehran Khalid Mahmud rejected the U.S. and Israeli presumption that Iran's nuclear program was for other than peaceful purposes.

In an exclusive interview with the English-language Daily IRAN NEWS, the ambassador said what was happening with Iran regarding the issue of the nuclear weapons had also happened with Pakistan.

He expressed wonder over the hue and cry of some countries on Iran's nuclear program "especially when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors have time and again certified that the Islamic Republic is pursuing a peaceful end in its atomic reactor project."

Saying that there was no evidence that Iran had violated its commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), he stressd that "every country has a right to pursue a nuclear program for peaceful purposes and no one can raise a finger of objection."

Speaking highly of Irano-Pakistan relations, Mahmud remarked that "geographical proximity, common cultural and liguistic affinity and, above all, a profound belief in Islam, are the most important factors which draw Iran and Pakistan together."

Mahmud underscored the importance of President Akbar Hashemi-Ranfsanjani's forthcoming visit to Pakistan, saying that "this visit will determine future bilateral realtions of Tehran and Islamabad." Rafsanjani is due to attend the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit in Islamabad next month. "There are several projects lined up for Iran and Pakistan and these will be discussed on the sidelines of the ECO summit."

He singled out the shipbuilding project as an important field for reciprocal cooperation by Iran and Pakistan, which is among the important items for discussion. He said that project had already been mapped out and would soon be implemented in Karachi.

The diplomat further noted: "The Iran-Pakistan defense cooperation is also commendable and recent high-level exchange of delegation in this field will certainly lead to closer cooperation between the two countries."

"Another major project," he said, "is the 1,600 kilometers gas pipeline which is to run from Iran's Southern Pars gas field to Karachi. It will take some four years to complete the project once it gets started."

According to the plan, Iran will supply 45 million cubic meters or 1.6 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day to Pakistan. The project costs around dlrs. 3.2 billion and a foreign consortium is expected to participate, the ambassador pointed out.

Commenting further on Irano-Pakistan relations, the ambassador said, "there is a polticial will between the two countries to work towards stronger cooperation." Pakistan had plans to buy 1,000 bulldozers from Iran in return for sugar and cement plants, he added.

On Karachi issue, he said that it was a complex case "with opposing political, ethnic and sectarian interests clashing with each other and complicated by a foreign hand which is visibly involved."

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On Afghanistan, Khalid Mahmud said that peace in that landlocked country was vital for Pakistan as Islamabad wanted to use this neighbor as a gateway for trade with the Central Asian countries. He denied his country had provided assistance to the Afghan Taleban group which seems poised to sweep Kabul. "We do not discriminate among the various groups of Afghanistan," he said.

The Pakistani ambassador concluded by saying that peace in South Asia hinged on the situation of Kashmir where a reign of terror had prevailed since 1990.

NATO-West Plans To Fight Fundamentalism Reported

NC2002131395 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0445 GMT 20 Feb 95

[Commentary by the News Research and Commentary Group]

[FBIS Translated Text] The West's new plans on confronting Islamism in the Middle East and North Africa have sparked various reactions among regional countries. In the first official reaction, the Libyan Government has described NATO's initiative for consultations with countries in the Mediterranean basin as increasing intervention in the domestic affairs of Arabs and has warned the Governments of Morocco, Mauritania, Egypt, and Tunis which are to participate in the first round of talks with NATO.

Although the Libyan Government itself strongly opposes the growth of Islamism in North Africa and is fighting this phenomenon, the declaration of its opposition to the NATO plan speaks of the fact that Libyan statesmen too have realized what the West's secret objectives are in propounding this issue. NATO has stated that the general objective behind its talks with the Mediterranean countries is to help Mediterranean security and stability, to achieve a better mutual understanding, and to put straight any possible misunderstandings on the goals of the organization. But we can realize what the reality is when we consider the NATO secretary general's remarks in which he pays lip service to the threat by Islamic fundamentalism against world security.

Inviting the Zionist regime to also participate in the talks deserves to be examined. Clearly, the West not only intends to legitimize its intervention in the domestic affairs of the Middle East and North African countries, but that it also intends to make the Zionists a partner in this.

There is no doubt that most of the governments ruling the Muslim nations in this region and especially shaky regimes such as that in Algeria welcome the West's initiative. Meanwhile, those governments that have compromised with the Zionist regime and have also established relations with it are expected to support the initiative, especially since the culmination of the Islamic movement in the region is, first and foremost, a threat to the foundations of these regimes before being a threat for the West.

However, those nations that have not accepted compromise with the Zionist regime and do not consider the West's interests in their countries to be legitimate will definitely not accept intervention by the Zionists and by the West in issues that are obviously their own domestic affairs.

Commerce Minister Holds Talks With Cuban Counterpart

LD1902153995 Tehran IRNA in English 1511 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 19, IRNA—Cuban Economy Minister Ernesto Melendez Bachs and Iranian Commerce Minister Yahya ol-Eshaq here Sunday [19 February] discussed Tehran-Havana cooperation, especially in the field of commerce.

Ol-Eshaq referring to Iran's annual import of one million tons of sugar, said that the country could barter its domestically made commodities that meet international standards such as manufactured goods, medicines, foodstuff and garments.

He also voiced Iran's readiness to directly purchase sugar from Cuba, adding that the Iranian chamber of commerce could take necessary measures in this regard.

Iran in ready to barter crude oil for sugar, the commerce minister said, hoping that Cuba could meet Iran's required sugar within the next few months.

Melendez in reply invited ol-Eshaq to pay an official visit to his country and expressed hope that the two countries could sign a trade agreement during ol-Eshaq's stay in Havana.

The Cuban minister said the two countries could make barter transactions for raw and refined sugar, chemical fertilizers and iron.

Ministers Discuss Barter Cooperation

LD1902124295 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1030 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cuban Economic Cooperation Minister Ernesto Melendez and Iranian Oil Minister Gholam Reza Aqazadeh met in Tehran today and stressed the need for cooperation in the sphere of oil and the expansion of economic relations. They also discussed economic exchanges, particularly oil and sugar, between the two countries.

The Cuban official also met with Iran's Minister of Commerce Yahya ol-Eshaq to discuss cooperation and trade between the two countries. In this meeting ol-Eshaq said that Iran is ready to buy sugar from Cuba and export commodities.

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In turn the Cuban official expressed hope regarding the signing of a trade agreement between the two countries and said: We could cooperate and barter for cane and refined sugar, fertilizers, steel, and other commodities this year.

Cuba Asks To Purchase Crude Oil

LD1902135895 Tehran IRNA in English 1233 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 19, IRNA—The Cuban minister of economic cooperation in his talks with the Iranian oil minister here Sunday [19 February], expressed his country's desire to buy one million tons of Iranian crude oil annually in return for Cuban sugar.

According to an Oil Ministry press release, the Cuban minister Ernesto Melendez Bachs briefed Oil Minister Gholam Reza Aqazadeh on Cuba's economic situation as well as its oil production trend and hoped for the expansion of mutual economic cooperation.

The Iranian oil minister also welcomed the improvement of economic ties between Tehran and Havana, the report added.

U.S. 'Hindering' Other Ties

LD2002093695 Tehran IRNA in English 0916 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 20, IRNA—Minister of Foreign Investment and Cooperation of Cuba Ernesto Melendez said here Monday [20 February] that the U.S. was hindering Cuba from establishing relations with other countries.

Melendez who is currently in Tehran to participate in the Fifth Irano-Cuban Joint Economic Commission, said that Tehran and Havana agreed to cooperate in the fields of health, pharmaceutics, industry, fisheries and sports as well as in exchange of oil and sugar.

Referring to bilateral relations between the two countries, the Cuban minister stressed that since the two sides have freed themselves from the yoke of big powers, they should further cooperate with each other at international scenes.

Melendez said that Havana was presently following the strategy of strengthening relations with countries in the Caribbean, Africa and the Middle East.

Besides upgrading ties with other countries, noted the minister, Cuba was to diversify its export goods. To this end, he added, Havana would welcome any foreign investment and attaches great importance to the issue.

Referring to the present complicated situation in his country, Melendez noted that under the status quo, Washington was to misuse the situation to deal blows on the Cuban revolution.

Rebel Radio Commentary on Kurdish Struggles

NC2002134895 (Clandestine) Voice of Iranian Kordestan in Persian 1630 GMT 19 Feb 95

[Unattributed commentary: "The Banner of Our People's National-Democratic Movement Will Continue To Be Hoisted"]

[FBIS Translated Text] On 19 August 1979 Khomeyni, the leader and founder of the Islamic Republic, declared a jihad against the oppressed and freedom-seeking people of Kordestan and thus imposed an overt and official war on our people. Since then a war which officials of the regime and leaders of the Islamic Republic thought would yield the favorable results they wanted has continued and has passed through various phases.

The brave resistance and confrontation by the people of Kordestan in the first initial months compelled the regime to retreat and apparently to adopt the method of talks and negotiations with the representative of the people of Kordestan. But the sly clergymen who had only resorted to these machinations in a bid to gain the necessary opportunity and time and to reorganize for a bigger war, resumed their military attacks on Kurdish villages and cities in the spring of 1980.

Since then, the Islamic Republic's war against our people, which is aimed at crushing the Kurdish people's national-democratic movement, has uninterruptedly continued in various forms. The armed confrontation and resistance by the children of the Kurdish people has shifted from the cities to the villages and from a war on the front to a partisan war, and the repression and crimes by the soldiers of the army of ignorance and superstition have met strong and enemy-breaking blows on the regime.

The confrontation with the Islamic Republic's regime does not mean that the Kurdish people love war and bloodshed. During the past 16 years, the people in Iranian Kordestan have seen how their cities, villages, farmlands, and homes have been the target of heavy artillery fire by the forces of the Islamic Republic. Tens of thousands of Kurds have lost their lives because of the Islamic Republic's repressive policies, and several thousand Kurdish combatants have been martyred in the unequal war with the regime's forces. Therefore, it is only natural for the Kurdish people to have a better understanding of war and destruction than anyone else.

The Kurdish people are aware of the indubitable fact that this war has been imposed on them by the antipopular clerical regime. But had our people bowed down to the Islamic Republic's aggressions and assaults and surrendered to the regime's wants, and had they not defended their rights and existence, today Kordestan and its national-democratic movement would not have been so extensive and it would be standing stable and strong in front of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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The Islamic Republic's antagonism toward our people is not summed up only in military form. What this criminal regime has done and is doing against the people of Kordestan is very similar to what a usurping regime does to a vanquished nation. If, on the one hand, the lives and properties of the Kurdish people have constantly been the target of bullets and fire, on the other hand their language, culture, national heritage, and the basis of their socioeconomic life have also been the target of various machinations and plots by the antipopular clerical regime. Opposition and hostility toward any effort to make the Kurdish culture and literature flourish, preventing the Kurds from practicing their national traditions, and hindering the free activities of Kurdish scholars and cultural figures on the pretext that such efforts do not conform with the Islamic culture and with the interests of the ruling system comprise only part of the policy of the turbaned men toward the people in Kordestan.

The regime strives to negate or to distort the historical realities and facts of the Kurdish people and to insult the prominent men in the history of Kordestan as well as the Kurds' historic achievements. Instead of being safeguarded, the historic monuments in Kordestan are being destroyed and reduced to rubble by the regime. On the one hand, the absolute majority in Kordestan, who are Sunnis, are facing discrimination and do not have the right to hold key, sensitive positions in the country; a large part of the people of Kordestan who are the followers of Ahl-e Haqq [an ancient, secret sect with adherents mainly in Kordestan and Azerbaijan, commonly known as the 'Guran' or 'Aliollahis] are being pressured in various ways to abandon their traditions and beliefs.

The forceful evacuation of hundreds of villages; preventing Kurdish animal breeders from migrating in the summer; and planting mines in a considerable part of the territories, pastures, forests, and mountains in Kordestan apparently in order to limit the Kurdish revolutionaries' operations have inflicted considerable and irreparable blows on the people in Kordestan. Efforts to spread discord among the people and depriving tens of thousands of people of work and of study in a free atmosphere in their own land on the sole pretext that these people are freedom-seekers or are relatives of combatants, as well as increasing pressure on the various strata of people, form only a small part of the regime's efforts to force the combatant Kurdish people to their knees in this part of our homeland, Iran.

Despite all the above, and in view of the fact that not a year, month, day, hour, or minute passes without the hypocritical clergymen hatching new plots to destroy our people's movement, our people's struggles against the clerical despotism continue in various forms. Khomeyni took the hope to destroy the national-democratic movement in Kordestan to his grave with him. Definitely and undoubtedly the current officials of the regime will also bury this dream with themselves. Those who have not been able to turn Kordestan into the island of tranquility that they wanted have seen the solution in the silent continuation of repression and in efforts to weaken the Kurdish people's liberation movement. Thus, all regime's efforts are now aimed at hiding from the world the fact that the Islamic Republic has deployed all its forces and potential to crush an oppressed nation.

It is not only a part of the people in Kordestan who take pride in the fact that the resistance and struggle against the Islamic Republic is continuing in Kordestan. The Kurdish people in general and our combatants in particular are also proud of this. However, it is no secret that the Democratic Party of Kordestan [DPK] has played the largest and most effective role in this confrontation and that it has paid for keeping this struggle going and for keeping the banner of our people's movement aloft with the blood of several thousand of its best people, peshmerga, and party cadres and leaders. This is why the DPK in general and all the party combatants—from a simple member and supporter to the leadership—in particular, have always been and are the target of the regime's assassinations, repressions, and plots, so much so that in order to inflict its blows on them, the Islamic Republic violates all political, moral, and geographic limits to implement its plots wherever it has been able to.

However, the DPK has always and under all conditions remained stable and strong on the scene of struggles; and in these sensitive moments which our people's struggles are facing, it instills confidence and hopes for the future in the people of Kordestan in their ability to continue their struggles and resistance. It also deems it necessary to request that the masses in Kordestan further tighten their ranks and rally around the banner of our people's struggles and express their support for the DPK more than ever before.

Undoubtedly, the national-democratic movement of the Kurdish people will ultimately achieve victory and our people's sacred objectives and aspirations will be fulfilled. No power can harm our people's unflinching determination to carry on the struggle in order to achieve this lofty objective.

Rebel Radio on Clerics' Power Struggle

NC1902102995 (Clandestine) Voice of Iranian Kordestan in Persian 1630 GMT 18 Feb 95

[Unattributed commentary: "Some Words on the Differences Between the Two Factions in the Clerical Regime"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] JAHAN-E ESLAM, which was published by the extremist clerical faction and chief editor Hadi Khamene'i, brother of Iran's Islamic Revolution leader Seyyed 'Ali Khamene'i, recently increased its criticism of the Hashemi-Rafsanjani government and tried to portray the existing shortages and problems especially the economic failures, as the result of the inefficiency of the Hashemi-Rafsanjani faction. In an

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interview that was published in the 19 Bahman 1373 [8 February 1995] issue of the newspaper, 'Ali Akbar Mohtashami criticized the Hashemi-Rafsanjani government's record and stated that Hashemi-Rafsanjani should not blame his failures on the clerics. In addition, Mohtashami had said that it is unfair for someone to impose his will and views on the masses and on the forces defending the Islamic Revolution and at the same time state that Imam Khomeyni believed the same thing. This is a brief excerpt of the remarks by Mohtashami who is from the extremist clerical faction, which were published in JAHAN-E ESLAM.

On the whole, Mohtashami's remarks are noteworthy for two reasons. First of all, his comments reveal that the differences between the two clerical factions have not only not ended, but have deepened even further. Undoubtedly the masses in our country have not forgotten that as a result of the confrontation between the two factions during the past few years, the pro-Hashemi-Rafsanjani group succeeded in coming to power and in forcing the pro-Mohtashami group to retreat. This was at a time when the majority of the Majles seats and the prime minister's post were in the hands of the latter group. On each and every occasion, these two factions have strongly criticized each other.

Second, although the differences between the two ruling clerical factions are concentrated on how to gain more power, by emphasizing the shortcomings of Hashemi-Rafsanjani's government, a noteworthy part of the Islamic Republic's failures have been revealed. This means that even the ruling clerics are unable to deny the chaotic economic situation and to ignore these facts. [passage omitted]

All these things show, in general, that following Khomeyni's demise none of the clergymen accepts the other's mode of thought and that each one considers himself to be more efficient than the other. Thus, an overt power struggle has started. Each one has a different reason for wanting to acquire more power and for pointing a finger at economic and other problems. No one has forgotten how—before coming to power—Hashemi-Rafsanjani accused the clique of Interior Minister Mohtashami, Prime Minister Musavi, and the hard-liner Majles deputies of obstructing economic reforms and the country's development and progress. Hashemi-Rafsanjani considered their participation in the rule as an obstacle. But we saw how although the hard-liners were relieved of their key positions, none of the regime's problems were solved and Hashemi-Rafsanjani was unable to bring about any changes in the economic, political, and social conditions.

Now the hard-liners are also thinking of regaining power. They are doing their best to criticize the Hashemi-Rafsanjani government. They are blaming the existing problems on the Hashemi-Rafsanjani government and his supporters. And within this context, they have started their preparations to acquire the presidential post and are propagandizing to this effect. Hadi Khamene'i, brother of [Ayatollah] Khamene'i and JAHAN-E ESLAM's chief editor, and former Prime Minister Hoseyn Musavi have been chosen as presidential candidates by the hard-liners.

The issue of the candidates requires a separate discussion. But the question is: Why and for how much longer should the two clerical factions consider themselves to be the owners of the country, imposing their views and thoughts on the masses in all possible ways, and underestimating public opinion? Overall, the Islamic Republic regime is the mentor and perpetuator of the ruling reactionary and antipopular policies and both factions have had their share in the current unfavorable situation. During the past 16 years, Iran has become an arena for reactionary and retrogressive clerics. The Iranian regime has had many opportunities and ample time to work for the country's development and progress. The clerics have been tested, and the unfavorable situation that prevails in many aspects is the outcome of their wrong, retrogressive, and dictatorial policies.

Under such conditions, the Iranian people have the right to curse the ruling regime and to consider the power struggle among the clerics as only a means to gain more power. The people have the right to believe that none of the factions want the people's happiness and the country's progress and development, that their current and past rivalries have merely been to gain power, and that neither of the two sides is working for the people's interests.

Now that the regime's situation has become so critical, in addition to the calamities and problems that the clerics have brought upon the people—they are disagreeing on how to divide the Iranian people's wealth—the respectable people of our country should unite their ranks and rise against the regime in its entirety to close the disgraceful dossier of the clerics and to free themselves forever from the clutches of the regime of turbanned men.

IRNA Reports Iraq's Desire for Normal Relations

LD1902155695 Tehran IRNA in English 1535 GMT 19 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Athens, Feb. 19, IRNA—A senior Iraqi official Sunday [19 February] denied press reports that Baghdad was bypassing United Nations sanctions and exporting oil via Iran and Turkey.

"I have not read the report, but of course it is not true," 'Abd-al-Raazaq al-Hashimi, director of the Foreign Relations Bureau of Iraq's ruling Baath Party, told the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC NEWS AGENCY (IRNA).

The Jewish American paper NEW YORK TIMES Thursday [16 February] reported that illicit oil sales have generated dlrs. [dollars] 800 million in the past year for Iraq.

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Hundreds of trucks take the crude oil to Turkey or Iran across Kurdish territory in the North of Iraq, claimed the American paper.

Hashimi, who headed an Iraqi delegation to Athens to participate in a conference against the embargo on Iraq, also denied a report in the London-based SUNDAY TIMES that Iraq had hidden biological weapons and missiles in the town of Tikrit.

"This is not true. All this is now coming up in the news media, the aim of this disinformation about Iraq always take place a short time before the revision of the (U.N.) sanctions against Iraq," he told IRNA.

"Those involved in surveillance of military hardware in Iraq know it is not true," he added.

The U.N. Security Council is to meet on 14 March to discuss the sanctions against Iraq.

The Iraqi official said Baghdad is in favour of improving relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"We stated over and over again. It is not in the interests of Iran and Iraq to be on a bad terms. So in the interest of both nations, as Muslim brothers, as neighbouring countries, we have to have normal relations. Iraq is always willing to sit and discuss and reach a base of understanding for better relations," he said.

Turkey Extradites First Iranian Since 1979

LD1802215295 Tehran IRNA in English 2142 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Ankara, Feb. 19, IRNA—An Iranian swindler who had escaped into Turkey about six months ago was extradited to Iran last Friday [17 February].

'Ali Asghar Shokrollah Abhari had swindled over 4,000 million rials in Iran and had escaped to Turkey six months ago. He was arrested following joint operations of the Iranian Embassy in Turkey and the Turkish officials who cooperated together upon an extradition agreement signed between the two countries in 1936.

This is the first time that Ankara has extradited an Iranian offender after the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979). Meanwhile Tehran has so far, extradited a number of the Turkish offenders upon the 1936 agreement. A number of the Iranian swindlers or political offenders have escaped into Turkey after the victory of the Islamic revolution. However, Turkey would no longer be a safe place for such persons by the complete implementation of the agreement.

Pakistan

Minister Denies Possession of Nuclear Weapons

BK1802093495 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 0200 GMT 18 Feb 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali has reiterated that Pakistan's nuclear program is for peaceful purposes. In an interview with a French daily L'ALSACE, he rejected speculation that Pakistan possesses nuclear weapons. The foreign minister said India has been falsely accusing Pakistan of supporting the freedom struggle in occupied Kashmir. He said the Indian allegation is aimed at misleading world public opinion toward holding a plebiscite in Kashmir. The foreign minister disclosed that India is behind the acts of terrorism in Karachi. He said Pakistan is opposed to all forms of terrorism and ready to cooperate with all countries against it.

About Afghanistan, the foreign minister said Pakistan has been maintaining, as usual, a neutral attitude toward developments in Afghanistan. It is the responsibility of the Afghan people themselves to end differences and to restore peace to their country.

Referring to relations between Pakistan and France, Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali said bilateral cooperation in a number of areas, including defense, economic, scientific, and cultural fields, is increasing.

Editorial Views U.S. Plan To End Nuclear Program

BK2002090595 Karachi NAWA-I-WAQT in Urdu 17 Feb 95 p 4

[Editorial: "The Plan to Make Pakistan Forgo its Nuclear Program"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Lynn Davis, the U.S. under secretary of state for arms control and international security affairs, has said that the United States is pursuing a plan to get India and Pakistan to stop their production of nuclear weapons forthwith. Pakistan possesses 15 atom bombs and has the capability to produce more weapons at short notice. We want to have Pakistan end its nuclear program in three phases—first cap its nuclear program, then reduce its nuclear capability, and finally abandon it completely. He said we have fixed our targets, which will be realized at all costs. At the moment, we want Pakistan to "freeze" its nuclear program.

So far as the question of the capping of Pakistan's nuclear program is concerned, there is no doubt that the United States has now come into the open, with one of its important officials having announced a thorough, phased plan of action in this connection. The discriminatory attitude maintained against our nuclear program from the very beginning is no secret and a carrot-and-stick policy is being used to make us more or less give up our efforts in this field. It has now become abundantly clear that objections are being raised only against Pakistan's nuclear program so as to make India a mini-superpower in this region. That was the reason why U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry signed a defense accord with India soon after his arrival in New Delhi from Pakistan. The extent and dimensions of Indian nuclear preparations are not hidden from the United States. A former CIA chief, while testifying before a Senate committee, confirmed that India possesses or has

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the capability to produce 60 to 100 atom bombs. What is astonishing is that when the Afghan war was at its peak, the U.S. Government did not even care about Pakistan's nuclear capability and thus gave a certificate to the Congress that Islamabad did not possess any atom bombs; but when we lost our status as a frontline state after the war, our nuclear capability once again became an issue and the Pressler Amendment was slapped on us with full force.

There has been a change in the geopolitical situation in this region after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and attempts have once again begun to blandish and pamper India. On the question of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT], India has already given its categorical answer to the West, and Pakistan, in the context of its national defense, has been maintaining that if New Delhi signs the NPT, Islamabad will not hesitate to do so either. Against this backdrop, maximum pressure should be put on India to roll back its nuclear program and eliminate the threat of any possible use of its military might against its smaller neighboring states. However, because of the weak stand taken by our successive governments, all the pressure has fallen on us.

The issue of the establishment of a nuclear monitoring center in Chakwal has become public after the U.S. defense secretary's visit to Pakistan. Even though the present government has explained that the center was approved by another government, it has not disclosed the name of that government. The explanation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that there are no foreigners present at this center and that only Pakistanis are running this facility does not in any way justify the establishment of this center. Is it not possible that the United States has adopted the method of nonintrusive inspection after rejecting the silent compromises [khamosh musalahat] made by our successive governments? If that is true, then we must not pay the price for a friendly relationship in a manner that will deprive us of an effective weapon of national defense.

UN Observers 'Miraculously' Escape Shooting

BK2002150495 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1400 GMT 20 Feb 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Two members of the UN Military Observers Group on India and Pakistan had narrow escape when they were fired upon by the Indian troops from across the [Kashmir] Line of Control in the Neelam Valley last evening. According to reports, Lieutenant Colonel Eric Brom Chrismar of Chile and Captain Phillip Auster Link of Belgium were in the area to investigate a case of cease-fire violation by the Indian troops. Despite the fact that the observers were flying UN flag, they were fired at by the Indian troops with automatic weapons. Their vehicle was completely destroyed while its occupants miraculously escaped unhurt. The Pakistani troops at the peril of their lives evacuated them under continuing firing. This is the fourth attack on UN observers during the last one year.

Official Says Country Not Aiding Taleban

BK1802155095 Islamabad PAKISTAN in Urdu 18 Feb 95 p 4

[Editorial:"Pakistan is not Supporting the Taleban"]

[FBIS Translated Text] A Foreign Office spokesman has stated in categorical terms that Pakistan is not supporting the Taleban of Afghanistan. It does not have full knowledge of what is happening in Afghanistan. Of course, Pakistan wants rapprochement among all the factions in Afghanistan and the creation of a situation of lasting peace there. Pakistan wants solidarity in Afghanistan and gives great importance to a unified Afghanistan. This clear and categorical announcement should dispel the misunderstanding that the Taleban are getting some sort of support or assistance from Pakistan. The Taleban have besieged Kabul. Golboddin Hekmatyar has staged a withdrawal in the face of an onslaught by Taleban and it appears as if he has moved out of the scene. The Taleban are now demanding from President Borhanoddin Rabbani that his government soldiers lay down arms or move out to the south of Kabul. If an occasion for confrontation between the Taleban and the government troops develops, there is fear of major bloodshed. The Taleban is a militant organization comprising students of religious schools, which was formed recently. This organization is equipped with sophisticated weapons and tanks. Iran has cautioned Pakistan that no harm should be caused to the Shi'ites in Afghanistan. Perhaps, Iran is also under the misapprehension that the Taleban are enjoying Pakistan's support and that Pakistan can stop them wherever it wants. However, it is only a presumption. Pakistan has no special connections with the Taleban. It is not clear who is supporting the Taleban. Pakistan's foreign secretary exchanged views with certain foreign diplomats based in Islamabad on the situation in Afghanistan. The diplomats include the U.S. ambassador, John Monjo, who visits Afghanistan frequently; this indicates that the United States is taking an interest in Afghan affairs. Meanwhile, the UN special emissary, Mahmoud Mestiri, is endeavoring to make the Afghan Government accept the UN peace agreement, which calls for the resignation of President Borhanoddin Rabbani and the establishment of a government at Kabul comprising the representatives from various parties. President Rabbani had agreed to it. However, it is not clear how and when will it will be implemented. The Taleban onslaught has also largely vitiated the situation. In any case, the circumstances indicate that there is a possibility for the Taleban to assume a decisive role in the overall situation in Afghanistan. According to the Foreign Office spokesman, Pakistan is considering the closure of its border with Afghanistan in view of the possibility that a deluge of refugees from Afghanistan might enter the country. Pakistan's

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first and the last desire is for the establishment of lasting peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan has no desire to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, nor will it interfere in any way. Pakistan is not the supporter of any particular Afghan group. It has equal goodwill toward all of them and has been advising them to remain united. Golboddin Hekmatyar is one of President Rabbani's opponents. He has retreated and has gone to Paghman. Ahmad Shah Mas'ud is supporting President Rabbani. He has refused to accept the Taleban's demands. Logically, this points to a future clash between the Taleban and Ahmad Shah Mas'ud.

Under these circumstances, it is clear that a UN peace plan for Afghanistan will yield no results. Fighting is going on between the troops of Hezb-e Wahdat of the Shias and Shura-e Nizar of Ahmad Shah Mas'ud in some localities of Kabul. The areas vacated by the withdrawal of Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Eslami were at first occupied by Afghan troops and were handed over to the Taliban later. The situation is complicated to such an extent that nothing can be said categorically as to who is supporting whom. Ahmad Shah Mas'ud is with President Rabbani. By rejecting the demands of the Taliban, he has in fact made it clear that President Rabbani is not prepared to submit to the Taliban. However, the question arises why the government troops handed over the localities which they had occupied after the withdrawal of Hekmatyar to the Taliban? The Afghan Government has handed over some localities of Kheyrabad, Chahar Asiab, and Pol-e Charkhi to the Taliban. There is also the possibility of an advance by the Taliban toward Sarowbi and Paghman. At present, Hekmatyar is staying with his troops in that locality. The Taliban are in pursuit of him to eliminate his power. The highway between Jalalabad and Kabul is fully under the control of Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Eslami. On the other side, the Taliban have opened up the way leading to Kabul through Qandahar, Meydan, and Gazni, along which traffic has been resumed and the supply of essential commodities to Kabul has been restored. The government of Afghanistan has expressed its gratitude over this. In view of the unexpected successes of the Taliban, certain analysts have opined that the Afghan people are fed up with the civil war. They have given up their hopes in other groups and have now started giving support to the new force, the Taliban. The close contact with the people is the reason for the Taliban's initial success. With the Foreign Office's categorical statement that Pakistan has not been supporting the Taliban, Iran's misapprehension will be removed. Pakistan is in favor of maintaining good relations with its neighbors. It does not tolerate interference in their internal affairs. The establishment of durable peace in Afghanistan will be a cause for satisfaction to all its neighbors, including Pakistan, as this alone will open up vistas for the establishment and promotion of fruitful commercial and economic ties between them. The reconstruction of Afghanistan will also depend upon the unity and prevalence of peace in the country.

Sri Lanka

LTTE Admits Killing Gandhi, Denies Plan for President

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[FBIS Transcribed Text] COLOMBO, Feb 21 (AFP)—Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels denied plans to assassinate President Chandrika Kumaratunga but tactily admitted having killed former Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi, press reports here said Tuesday [21 February].

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) discounted claims by Kumaratunga herself that the guerrilla group had targetted her despite current peace moves to end Sri Lanka's ethnic bloodletting.

"Chandrika's hand is clean. We have no reason to assassinate her... What is important is to find out why some leaders were assassinated than to find out who assassinated them," LTTE idealogue Anton Balasingam said.

He told reporters in their northern Jaffna stronghold over the weekend that a solution to Sri Lanka's dragging conflict was possible through negotiations with Kumaratunga who launched the peace process after winning August polls.

Kumaratunga announced earlier this month that a cameraman arrested near her ancestral home outside the capital had been commissioned by LTTE leaders in the island's northern Kilinochchi region to photograph places she visits.

She said the plan fitted into the LTTE style of previous assassinations of high profile politicians whose movements were closely photographed before striking with a suicide bomber.

Rajiv Gandhi was killed by a Tamil suicide bomber in 1991 but the Tigers have always publicly denied involvement. However, LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran and his intelligence chief Pottu Amman have been named as the main suspects.

"Why was he (Gandhi) assassinated. His army killed over 10,000 Tamils here. We can't blame the troops for these killings. The responsibility lay with Gandhi for ordering a war with the Tamils," Balasingam was quoted as saying.

Gandhi as Indian premier ordered troops to Sri Lanka in line with a July 1987 bilateral peace pact aimed at ending Tamil separatism in the island republic.

The LTTE initially accepted the peace pact but fighting later resumed with the Indian army which lost some 1,140 soldiers with over 7,000 wounded during its acrimonious 32 month presence ending in March 1990.

Tigers have also been accused of killing Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa in May 1993 and opposition leader Gamini Dissanayake in October last year. However, Tigers have denied all these killings.

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